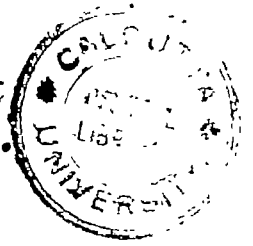


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Wordsworth, Nature, and the Revolution

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I

The world sees William Wordsworth as the poet of "Nature," but he himself always insisted that he had something important to say about man. Had he, in fact? Socially and politically he changed, to the dismay of many young men who had drawn inspiration from his early work, from a revolutionary republican to a timid old conservative who thought that parliamentary reform would mean the ruin of England. But this is not an unusual life-story, and only goes to show that what a poet "has to say" is not the same thing as his views. His remark in *Tintern Abbey* about "the still, sad music of humanity" is nearer to the heart of the matter, but even this is not very enlightening; it shows that "Nature" and "Man" were somehow integrated in a single vision in his mind, but it does not explain why and how. *The Prelude* gives a fuller account.

In *The Prelude* there are two major themes, both vividly presented: first, the growth of his insight into "Nature," which he describes in the early books and comes back to at the end; then, in Books IX to XI, the impact on him of the French Revolution. The interaction of these two experiences in his mind is less easy to follow, and yet in a sense it is the point of the whole poem. It caused him to revalue his whole understanding of human nature, and in the ten years or so that followed that effort, the period of his greatest creative power, his poetry looked at man from an angle that was new, and in its way revolutionary.

There is no need to go over again the story of his understanding of "Nature;" no amount of paraphrase and critical analysis will make it clearer than Books I and II of *The Prelude*. By the time he was seventeen, he says, he was so intensely conscious of a living presence in the world of nature that he lived in a kind of ecstasy of communion.

I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still.

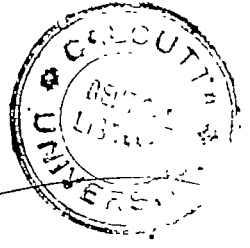
* * * *

Wonder not
If high the transport, great the joy I felt,
Communing in this sort through earth and
heaven
With every sort of creature.

(II 399-411)

It was a mystical vision, a direct experience whose reality he could no more doubt than a swimmer can doubt that water bears him up. Even when in later years it came to him no more, it was still a remembered fact to which he felt himself compelled to bear witness.

(He took a degree, rather unenthusiastically, at Cambridge. In his first summer vacation, walking home at dawn after a night's dancing, the full splendour of the vision returned upon him and carried with it not so much a resolution as a realization that he was destined for poetry (IV 333-7). During that summer the Bastille fell; in the ears of half England it reverberated like the crash of feudalism, but Wordsworth makes



no mention of it. At that stage he must have been far less politically conscious than the average student.) He spent his last summer vacation on a long walking tour through France and over the Alps into Italy. Other young men, if they could afford it, travelled in Europe to see the world and learn about politics and society, taking the landscape as a mere background: Wordsworth's ambition was rather to see the earth, to meet strange mountains and lakes and waterfalls. It happened that he reached Calais just when the King was swearing allegiance to a new Constitution, and on his journey he met delegates to the Constituent Assembly returning home, jubilant over their achievement. He joined in their good spirits, but his two accounts of the tour, in *Poetical Sketches* and Book VI of *The Prelude*, make it clear that the Constituent Assembly was insignificant to him compared to the Alps.

(All the same, the next year—1791—when he wanted to stave off the doom of working for a living, he persuaded his guardian to send him to France to study the language. It had probably dawned on him that the history of the world was being changed in France, and that if he meant to speak to his generation as a poet it would be well to feel the change for himself.)

Books IX and X describe his conversion to the revolutionary ideal. It was less through intellectual analysis—for he still knew next to nothing about politics—than through a series of contrasting impressions. (First, he disliked the group of aristocratic army officers billeted in the same house with him at Orleans. Counter-revolutionaries all but one, they were arrogant and narrow, and talked openly of calling in foreign aid against the government they served, to win back the privileges of their class.) On the other hand he was deeply moved by the simple idealism of the peasants, poor and illiterate, whom

he saw leaving everything that was dear to them to fight for the revolution, and it seemed that a cause must be good if it evoked such nobility of feeling. With this contrast before him, he made friends with the one officer whose sympathies were with the revolution, and learnt from him to understand what they were fighting for. He became an ardent revolutionary. This was his second deep emotional commitment, as absolute, though in a different field, as his earlier dedication to nature.

✓ On his way home in 1792 he was in Paris a few weeks after the September massacres, and says (X 81-9) that he felt in them a presage of more to come. Far from shaking his faith in the revolution, the presentiment almost made him decide to stay on in France and work with the moderate party to defend its ideals. One passage (X 197-228) suggests that he may even have been thinking of some desperate act such as assassinating Robespierre to forestall the Terror—something, at any rate, that would have brought him to an untimely end and deprived the world of his poetry. But he ran short of money and it may be, of nerve—and went back to London.

In London he met radical politicians and philosophers who shared his enthusiasm. The skyline between vision and reality was blurred in a luminous haze; it seemed an easy thing to abolish history and remodel the world on principles of justice and reason. Fresh from the spectacle of the French peasants and the inspiration of Beaupuy's teaching, he felt himself dedicated to the achievement of liberty, equality and fraternity for all mankind. This was the time of which he said

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,

But to be young was very heaven.

Books X and XI describe a gradual passage from exaltation to perplexity, disgust, and finally to a mental crisis that forced

him to think everything out afresh. It is told rather obscurely, without the concrete detail that makes the experience of the earlier books so convincing; as De Selincourt remarks, it looks as if Wordsworth disliked that period of his life and shrank from dwelling on it. Still, the process of change is clear.

History, in the first place, was making things difficult by taking the wrong turnings. In France there were the atrocities of the Terror. It is easy, but too simple, to say that the Terror sickened Wordsworth and made him retreat in panic from the risks of revolution.) Naturally it sickened him: no responsible man revels in massacre or looks forward to bringing it to his own country; but he is very clear that this did not shake his faith in the Revolution and its ideals. As he saw it, centuries of oppression had brutalized the Paris mob and liberation could not turn them suddenly into saints.

When a taunt

Was taken up by scoffers in their pride,
Saying, "Behold the harvest that we reap
From popular government and equality,"
I clearly saw that neither these nor aught
Of wild belief engrafted on their name
By false philosophy had caused the woe,
But a terrific reservoir of guilt

And ignorance filled up from age to age,
That could no longer hold its loathsome
charge,

But burst and spread in deluge through
the land.

(X 679-89).

He blamed the Jacobin leaders for exploiting instead of curbing the passions of the mob; but more bitterly he blamed England for declaring war, thereby giving the extremists an excuse to intensify terror in the name of national safety. The war was a much deeper emotional shock than the Terror. It divided his affections from his emotions and

isolated him among his own countrymen, and he describes his feelings when in the village church prayers for victory were offered up.

And, 'mid the simple worshippers,

perchance

I only, like an uninvited guest

Whom no one owned, sate silent,

shall I add,

Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

(X. 303-6)

To complete his misery the British Government entered on a savage campaign of repression at home, as if it were possessed by a panic-stricken hatred of freedom.

But disillusionment with England was followed by even greater disillusionment with France. Victorious at the beginning of the war, the French moved from defence to aggression. Their attack on Switzerland—the oldest and freest republic in Europe—in 1798 would not fit into a revolutionary picture. And then Napoleon was proclaimed Emperor and crowned by the Pope: to Wordsworth and to many young men who had thrilled to the fall of the Bastille, it seemed that France had reverted to tyranny and superstition, and that liberty had changed sides in the war. (X 363-6). As the times changed, he thought of liberty more and more in terms of national independence rather than of social equality, and saw England as Europe's one bulwark against enslavement. This was where he stood in 1802, when he began his political sonnets.

In the face of such facts it was difficult to keep faith with an abstract vision. Even so, I imagine that Wordsworth might have felt differently had he still been in rural France, drawing courage from the peasants' idealism, for these were the kind of people he could love and admire; but neither political leaders nor intellectuals seemed to him worthy of the common men who looked up to them.

Padharanand

He found himself ill at ease with the thought of his age.)

At first, since events were letting him down, he tried like others to take refuge in abstract thought, and to plan a world reorganized by reason. And at first it was exhilarating.

O times

In which the meagre, stale, forbidding
ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country of romance!

(XI 112-15)

But the exhilaration soon faded. He noticed that those who set out to live by reason forgot that they had passions, and then their passions, disguised as reason, would rise up and justify any line of action that appealed to them. (XI 233-6). The worst of it was that in trying to be rational he himself lost faith in his own spontaneous sense of right and wrong; those deep feelings that underlie all morality lost their authority—

till, demanding formal proof,
And seeking it in every thing, I lost
All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
Yielded up moral questions in despair.

(XI 306-10)

Something of the inner turmoil of this period is reflected in *The Borderers*, his one attempt at tragedy.

In the whole account of his French experience Wordsworth said nothing about Annette Vallon. To many modern critics this omission falsifies his story: the fact that he left a girl in France who was the mother of his illegitimate child seems to them to throw a different light on his feelings about the Revolution. Our generation, preoccupied with psycho-analysis, is ready to see in sex the key to every problem of human adjustment. But, in the first place, Wordsworth thought his experience worth recording not because it was typical. Thousands of his contemporaries had travelled the same road from faith to

confusion: not all of them had daughters to bring them to this pass, so there must have been more general causes at work. Nevertheless he did see a connection between love and politics, for he told a story very like his own in *Vaudracour and Julia*. Originally it was part of Book Nine of *The Prelude*, and in that context its meaning is understandable. It is a love-story, that begins with reckless, generous faith in what Keats was later to call "the holiness of the heart's affections;" it collides with a wall of brute fact and prejudice too strong to break down, and ends in defeat and despair. And this was what happened in the larger world to the revolutionary faith of his generation. Thus the story is a veiled criticism of the romantic attitude to life. Unlike a modern psycho-analyst, Wordsworth did not see his sexual life as the source of his political convictions, but he did see the same spirit at work in both, the same generous impulse and the same miscalculation of strength that had wrecked the hopes of his age.

The significant difference between himself and others, that justified him in telling his story, was in his power of recovery. It was not Annette who gave him this: it was Nature, the divinity of his youth, who returned to rescue him at last from the labyrinth of abstract thought. In the last three books, the two separate loyalties are welded together into a coherent vision.

II

Throughout Books IX, X, and XI, it seems as if the vision of man had crowded the vision of nature out of Wordsworth's mind. Indeed, it is difficult to relate the trance-like ecstasy described in the earlier books to a life of active political controversy. It was an experience that lifted him beyond human relationships into a region where the inmost solitary self was one with universal being; it was not

From nature doth emotion come, and moods
Of calmness equally are Nature's gift.....
(XIII 1-2)

Nature is never deflected from law, never impatient for quick returns ; she works steadfastly, maturing the harvest from the seed in due time. And man, being a part of nature, is essentially good. Therefore, to regenerate society, take man as he naturally is, part of a family and a neighbourhood, winning a difficult life from the earth ; see what is best in him and preserve and develop that. Do not deny the living man in favour of an abstraction without local habitations or particular affections.

Man may be demoralized by grinding poverty or by overcrowding in cities where relationships have no permanence, but to rise to his greatest moral height he does not need wealth or learning ; nature can give him the ideal and the discipline. Deep insight is sometimes inarticulate, and truth, fortitude, the tenderest and strongest love, are as common among the humble as the great. But since literature through the ages has been written for the great and learned, it has always flattered them by denying this. Poets and historians have made too much of violence, ambition and spectacular power, too little of the patient, unassertive virtues of the common people, though it is these that sustain the world. Wordsworth resolved to be the first poet to celebrate the grandeur of the common man.

Of these, said I, shall be my song ; of these,
If future years mature me for the task,
Will I record the praises, making verse
Deal boldly with substantial things.

(XIII 232-5)

In the Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* he linked poetry explicitly to a criticism of society. What ennobles man, he says, is his power of feeling : to be greatly human is to feel deeply and sensitively in the

normal course of life, without having to be excited by gross and violent stimulants. A poet's special business is to quicken this sensibility, and his work was never more needed than to-day.

For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies.

(The diagnosis is as true of our own times as of his). Simple country people are the least affected by these new forces of disturbance. They till the soil and follow their sheep as men have since the beginning of history, and the changes of the seasons mean more to them than the changes of dynasties. Their way of thinking represents the natural, enduring human values. Then, if the poet is to recall man to his true self, let him study the country people, not patronizingly but with respect and imagination, and let him express their understanding of life in language they will recognize as true to their thoughts. To dress it up in idioms borrowed from another class would only be a distortion.

This was the bare essence of Wordsworth's view of poetry when he wrote the Preface. Most of us read it with Coleridge's criticism in mind, and Coleridge, by raising the argument to the level of pure philosophy, distracts us from the social content. He was far more at home with abstract thought than Wordsworth ; also, perhaps, when he wrote *Biographia Literaria* he had forgotten, and would not willingly have remembered, how much

the ideas of the revolution had mattered to them both. But Wordsworth is the first critic who related poetry to society in a state of change, and since his attempt there have been many others. ✓

✓ At first sight the collection of human beings in Wordsworth's poems are unpromising illustrations of the grandeur of common life. *Guilt and Sorrow*, begun on that very walking-tour, tells the story of a vagabond woman and an ex-soldier, afraid to go home because he is wanted for murder. Then there is the old Cumberland beggar, shuffling along the road bent almost double, living on scraps the cottagers save for him. A social reformer would put him into a home for aged paupers, but Wordsworth says no: let him go on till he dies of exposure some frosty night. Derelict as he appears he is at least free, and he plays a part in human society by calling out the generosity of the poor who too seldom have the privilege of giving instead of receiving. Along with this poem in *Lyrical Ballads* there was Simon Lee of the rheumaticky ankles, pathetically grateful to be helped over a stile; old Goody Blake who cursed a farmer for not letting her gather firewood; a man sobbing by the roadside because he had to sell his last lamb; a deserted woman who went mad and killed her baby; the little girl (Coleridge said she must be either badly brought up or exceptionally stupid) who could not grasp that her brothers in the churchyard were dead; and Johnny the Idiot who went for a moonlight ride. In the next few years there were more deserted mothers and dubious beggars and tramps; there were also *Michael* and *The Brothers* and the serenely beautiful *Lucy* and the weirdly impressive *Leech-gatherer*. In these last, whether or not you can analyse it, you cannot help feeling the power of Wordsworth's vision of them against vast backgrounds of earth and

sky, and if you return to the others from them, they grow in meaning.

They are all humble people, occupied with their own affairs, whose stories you might come across in any village. Nothing they do will change the world, they do not ride but are ridden over by the forces of politics and government. They are often aware of injustice, but do not sour their lives with envy, and when they lose everything live on without embitterment. They love their families with deep, all-tolerating affection, and their homes perhaps even more; if misfortune drags them apart, their suffering is all the deeper because it is silent, and borne without vindictiveness against God or man. Theirs is the strength not of defiance but of endurance; collectively they say that suffering, not action, sounds the depth of human nature. They live close to the earth, and at times their passivity takes on the grandeur of a rock or an old tree, immobile through the changes of sunlight and storm, as if all the elemental powers have been built into their quiet but not unfeeling acceptance of what comes. ✓

Here the two sides of Wordsworth's mind are reconciled. His sense of a living being of inexpressible glory, manifesting itself in the powers of nature, justifies him in glorifying the simple countryman as the norm of human life. And with this image he confronts the traditional image of heroic greatness, the hero of action from Achilles to Napoleon Buonaparte. He has no use for that kind of greatness. In the *Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle* (1807) he takes up a blood-feud story that would have delighted the old ballad-makers—and just when the lost heir has returned and the day of vengeance is prepared, he drops it. Young Lord Clifford, he says, was not a warlike man because in his time of exile he had been brought up by shepherds.

Love had he learnt in huts where poor
men lie ;
 His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
 The silence that is in the starry sky,
 The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

So naturally, instead of fighting he settled down to be a model landlord and died lamented by all his tenants. From the heroic point of view nothing could be a flatter anticlimax, and nothing could more effectively sum up Wordsworth's quietly subversive sense of values.

It is subversive of the values of aristocracy, but 'all the same the Wordsworthian common man is not what' a revolutionary leader would like him to be. He is not an insurgent clamouring for his rights; he is allergic to oratory and will not march under banners against the government; altogether he wants too little to be the manpower of a revolution. He is only the patient figure who endures and rebuilds and forgets past hatreds, without whom the revolutionaries and reactionaries would long ago have torn the world to bits between them.✓

All such images are myths; the Wordsworthian countryman is as much a myth as the perfect knight of mediæval chivalry or the class-conscious proletarian of Marxism. But then, all such myths are distilled from aspects of life, and their relation to the lives of real people gives them some dynamic power. Wordsworth thought the best possible life was that of the freeholding peasant, especially as he had seen it in Cumberland in his boyhood. To live by hard outdoor work, but with the independence of one's own cottage and land; to have a family for whom that bit of property, passed on for generations, was a security and a focus for their hopes and affections, and neighbours, not too many, to give and take help in time of need; such a life fostered all the virtues he understood and admired. If it also fostered

dulness and narrowness, these limitations seemed to him unimportant.

At the turn of the century England was still largely a peasant country, and Wordsworth could fairly take the peasant as the representative man, whose rights constituted the freedom of the people. That was when he was writing his most vigorous poetry. He saw, more clearly than most people, that the old way of life was in danger, that war and industrialism were robbing the peasants of property and security, driving them away from the land. He wanted to break down the unimaginative indifference of the governing classes by showing them life as the poor countryman felt it.

We do not now think of his poems as political propaganda; they would no longer be readable if they were not very much more; but in fact many of them are quickened by indignation at particular grievances. In *Guilt and Sorrow* there are an ex-service-man, discharged penniless from the American wars, and a woman whose husband had been taken by the pressgang; she had followed him to the wars because there were no separation allowances in those days, and had come home a widow. A modern writer would call it "social realism." Goody Blake might have gathered firewood in the old days without leave from anyone, but now the common lands were being enclosed in private farms, and Harry Gill had an owner's right to stop her. The man in *The Last of the Flock* has applied to the parish council for relief in hard times, and has been told that as a property-owner he is not entitled to it. Many modern socialists would agree with the council. But as Wordsworth saw it his sheep were his freedom, and when they made him sell them and hire himself out for wages to feed his children they were turning a free nation into slaves.

Michael too has fallen on hard times,

and has to choose between selling his land and sending away his only son. He sees no choice; the boy must go and the land stay in the family. Once Luke has gone to London Wordsworth is not interested in him; he dismisses him in five lines and a half, as if it were a mere matter of course that he would come to a bad end there. He cares only for Michael, whom he sees as an embodiment of grand, austere way of life that ought not to die out. He sent the poem to Charles James Fox, leader of the opposition in parliament, with a letter appealing to him to protect such men from such a fate.

The domestic affections will always be strong amongst men who live in a country not crowded with population, if these men are placed above poverty. But if they are proprietors of small estates, which have descended to them from their ancestors, the power which these affections will acquire amongst such men is inconceivable by those who have only had an opportunity of observing hired labourers, farmers, and the manufacturing poor. Their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances when they would otherwise be forgotten. It is a fountain fitted to the nature of social man from which supplies of affection, pure as his heart was intended for, are daily drawn. You, Sir, have a consciousness, upon which every good man will congratulate you, that the whole of your public conduct has in one way or another been directed to the preservation of this class of men, and those who hold similar situations. You have felt that the most sacred of all property is the property of the Poor.

Evidently, at that time Wordsworth's poetry had an immediate social purpose. Needless to say, it is not the purpose that

makes the poetry, or makes it good: the poetry stands in its own right although his politics have lost their meaning long ago. But the sense of urgency quickened Wordsworth's own creative energy. His rustic figures, such as Lucy and the Leechgatherer and Michael brooding by his unfinished sheepfold, gain something from his belief that his way of seeing them mattered to his times; that his integrated vision of man and nature was not only true in eternity but relevant to human setion here and now.

III

After 1808 or thereabouts Wordsworth's poetry grew duller and duller. This is not the fate of every long-lived poet, not of Sophocles for instance or Milton or Yeats, and no one has adequately explained why Wordsworth's inspiration had to fail him. He was also turning into a reactionary, and to some people this explains his bad poetry. I do not think the connection quite so simple, but perhaps part of the answer lies in this history of his times, which in a sense thrust aside everything he stood for.

First, as has been said, events made him change his view of the war. Looking back, he explained the change in a letter to a friend:

I abandoned France, and her Rulers, when they abandoned the struggle for Liberty, gave themselves up to Tyranny, and endeavoured to enslave the world. I disapproved of the War against France at the commencement, thinking, which was perhaps an error, that it might have been avoided—but after Buona-parte had violated the Independence of Switzerland, my heart turned against him, and against the Nation that could submit to be the Instrument of such an outrage. Here it was that I parted, in feeling, from the whigs, and to a certain degree united with their Adversaries, who were free from the delusion

then allowed them to withdraw from Portugal with honour and safety. Historians say that the Convention was sensible from the point of view of the general strategy of the war. Wordsworth's fury was roused because the British and French commanders negotiated like two superior powers who understood each other; over the heads of the Spanish claim to national sovereignty, which to him was the sacred principle that justified the war.

Spain, then as now, was not politically democratic. It had a proud aristocracy and an unconstitutional monarchy; it was intensely Catholic—from Wordsworth's angle, sunk in bigotry and the mental terror of the Inquisition. It could easily be argued that French rule would mean prosperity and enlightenment for the ordinary Spaniard. But for Wordsworth all that mattered was that they were a peasant people fighting for their traditional way of life. He saw them as the true defenders of liberty and was convinced that they would fight on for ever. If they insisted on a democratic constitution for themselves, well and good—he thought a free people would inevitably do so in their own time—but imposed on them from outside it would only be another form of tyranny. As for prosperity and enlightenment, he positively disliked them for destroying all that he cherished in his own land...in many parts of Europe (and especially in our own country); men have been pressing forward, for some time, in a path which has betrayed by its fruitfulness; furnishing them constant employment for picking up things about their feet, when thoughts were perishing in their minds. While Mechanic Arts, Manufactures, Agriculture, Commerce, and all those products of knowledge which are confined to gross, definite, and tangible objects, have, with the aid of Experimental Philosophy, been every day putting on more brilliant colours; the splendour of the Imagination has been

fading: Sensibility, which was formerly a generous nursling of rude Nature, has been chased from its ancient range in the wide domain of patriotism and religion with the weapons of derision by a shadow calling itself good sense...

The progress of these arts also, by furnishing such attractive stores of outward accommodation, has misled the higher orders of society in their more disinterested exertions for the service of the lower. Animal comforts have been rejoiced over, as if they were the end of being. A neater and more fertile garden; a greener field; implements and utensils more apt; a dwelling more commodious and better furnished; let these be attained, say the actively benevolent, and we are sure not only of being in the right road, but of having successfully terminated our journey. Now a country may advance, for some time, in this course with apparent profit; these accommodations, by zealous encouragement, may be attained; and still the Peasant, or Artisan, their master, be a slave in mind; a slave rendered ever more abject by the very tenure under which these possessions are held; and if they veil from us this fact, or reconcile us to it, they are worse than worthless.

He seems here to foresee and denounce not only the progress of science but the Welfare State of our own times, still hardly more than a fantasy in the dreams of a few thinkers. He argues with passionate conviction that prosperity is not the goal of freedom. The goal of freedom is an attitude of mind that counts material wealth as nothing compared to the gifts of imagination and the spirit. Material wealth does not promote it, as England's example shows; even civil liberty is not essential to it, for without civil liberty it has existed in the past; but without national independence it is unattainable. In his mind, national independence and

ownership of land appear to be the same thing. Of all men, he says, the peasant is the natural heir of these gifts of freedom. For he is in his person attached, by stronger roots, to the soil of which he is the growth; his intellectual notices are generally confined within narrower bounds: in him no partial or antipatriotic interests counteract the force of those nobler sympathies and antipathies which he has in right of his Country: and lastly, the belt or girdle of his mind has never been stretched to utter relaxation by false philosophy, under a conceit of making it sit more easily and gracefully. These sensations are a social inheritance to him; more important, as he is precluded from luxurious, and those which are usually called refined, enjoyments.

/ This picture of the imaginary peasant is the same in outline as that of the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, but militarism has changed the colouring. In Wordsworth's mind poverty, narrowness and ignorance, which to most people are the drawbacks of peasant life, have become positive virtues. Also, he has been expatriated: instead of Michael clinging to his family inheritance he is now the Spaniard defending his country. In the process he has inevitably become more of an abstraction, less recognizable as a living man.

The Tract was not published till the Convention of Cintra had ceased to be hot news. There were delays in printing, and fears about the Government's reaction to it, and Wordsworth's letters give the impression that although these things irritated him, he was not possessed by the sense of urgency that might have overcome them. He did not so much hope to influence his times as to leave it on record for posterity, to show how he had judged passing events in the light of eternal principles.

When peace came, after the Battle of Waterloo, there was no going back from the

changed world. Rural England still existed, but it had ceased to be indisputably the essential England: Towns were growing more populous, swarming with new kinds of people whose lives seemed to him unreal. On fine days the new railway brought them to Rydal by hundreds; with his poems in their hands, to contemplate nature and the poet of nature; to Wordsworth they were like an insect-invasion blighting the loveliness of the Lakes. There were new quarrels: manufacturerers believed in free trade and free competition: factory workers, rootless, propertyless, all but homeless, demanded freedom to organize and strike. Both wanted cheap bread at the farmers' expense, and both stood for a way of life that he rejected with all his soul. In his youth he had been for the peasant against the aristocrat; now he found the old class divisions of the countryside, aristocracy and all, much more human than the impersonal relations of the new business men.

I see clearly that the principal ties which kept the different classes of society in a vital and harmonious dependence upon each other have, within these 30 years, either been greatly impaired or wholly dissolved. Everything has been put up to market and sold for the highest price it would buy. Farmers used formerly to be attached to their Landlords, and labourers to their Farmers who employed them. All that kind of feeling has vanished—in like manner, the connexion between the trading and landed interests of country towns undergoes no modification whatsoever from personal feeling, whereas within my memory it was almost wholly governed by it. A country squire, or substantial yeoman, used formerly to resort to the same shops which his father had frequented before him, and nothing but a serious injury, real or supposed, would have appeared to him a justification for breaking up a connexion which was attended

with substantial amity and interchanges of hospitality from generation to generation. All this moral cement is dissolved, habits and prejudices are broken and rooted up, nothing being substituted in their place but a quickened self-interest, with more extensive views and wider dependencies-but more lax in proportion as they are wider.

(To Daniel Stuart. April 7th 1817)

In his youth he had been a democrat; now, since a wider franchise would give the towns power over the country, he thought the Parliamentary Reform Act of 1833 would mean the inevitable ruin of England.

For Wordsworth there could never be any ideal man but the free peasant, but it no longer made political or social sense to see him as the representative Englishman. His myth might be an eternal truth but it had lost its dynamic relation to the present. And it seems to me that this must have been discouraging to his creative genius. He still believed in his own moral insight, he went on writing, his mastery of the craft of verse did not decline. But he took his themes more often from legend and literature, or else from his own domestic life; he had less to say about freedom, more about discipline and the beauty of tradition; he indulged more and more in prosy moralizing. Only in rare flashes he recaptured the animation of his thirties, when he had felt that visionary insight, bestowed on him by Nature herself, had given him a distinctive part to play in the remaking of the world.

No reader, I hope, will mistake this for an attempt to say the last word about Wordsworth; it is only one of many possible approaches. It is not a critical evaluation of his poetry. In tracing his thought, it takes for granted those mystical intuitions that are the ground of his originality, and follows up some secondary consequences, dwelling chiefly on his relation to his age. His age

is over, and if he had not somehow transcended it we would not read him at all.

But ours, like Wordsworth's is a revolutionary age, and the relationship of creative art to contemporary social and political movements has again become important, as it was to the Romantics and was not to the later nineteenth century. To us, imaginative creation is one way of thinking out the meaning of forces that are changing the world, and so it was to Wordsworth: he could not transcend his age without plunging into its immediate problems. His poetry is a reaction, not to an abstract idea of "Revolution," but to things that were happening in his time.

His early revolutionary enthusiasm was not a youthful lapse from which "Nature" rescued him and taught him to be a pious, law-abiding citizen; neither was he a renegade who sold the cause for a government pension—"one wrong more to man, one more insult to God." These are two versions of the same view, phrased according to one's political opinions, but they are unfair to Wordsworth because they leave out of account his own vision of man as he was and had been. It was this, and not any political movement, that his poetry had to serve. In its protest against false values it was a deeply revolutionary vision. For a few years, while the shape of the future was not clear, it seemed to be a dynamic force for the age, and in the excitement of that hope he put it into poetry that has stamped it on the human imagination for all time. But it did not include the kind of man that was coming into being in a rapidly changing world, and soon he found that it belonged less to the future than to the past. This broke the spring of his poetry; he shrank from the world in his own congenial family circle, and grew old and dull. It is hard to see what else he could do, since he and the world were what they were. He would not have become a better poet by trying to change sides, in order to take part in an age of progress moving away from his idea of the good life.

Poetic Drama and "Murder in the Cathedral"

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(1)

In early times it was customary to write drama in verse. Men loved poetry in drama, and the use of verse was a natural convention. As prose developed, it appeared in drama and replaced verse. Narrative poetry gave way to prose fiction, and the place of Chaucer was taken by the novelist. But the development of prose is not the only reason for this change. There is a deeper reason which lies in the spirit and taste of the modern age. The movement to revive poetic drama is therefore very significant.

There is a growing impression that prose drama is not enough. Even an inveterate prose dramatist like Somerset Maugham writes: "But my melancholic prognosis applies only to the modern realistic drama." (1) He makes his view clearer when he writes: "To my mind the drama took a wrong turning when the demand for realism led it to abandon the ornament of verse." (2)

What is the limitation of prose drama? "Prose drama", says Abercrombie, "gives you an imitation of the ready-made boot of existence, gives it you as exactly as it can... The preference for prose plays over poetic drama is therefore a preference for ordinary appearance over spiritual reality: it is, in fact, a form of materialism." (3) It is customary to-day to assure the common man that his taste is the standard. But his mind does not move quickly enough to follow the flight of poetry. Poetry seeks to present the essence of life, and in doing so it becomes

an interpretation or criticism of life. But life in dilution is the stuff of prose drama which is easily acceptable to the modern common man. Clifford Bax reports that he heard a soldier whispering to his girl: "Oh, come along! This is one of their old plays where you can't understand anything." (4) The play was *The Taming of the Shrew*! But it is hardly fair to blame the common man alone. Every director complains of the modern actor's difficulty in reciting verse. Even our literary style is controlled by the pride of understatement, and prose of a subdued kind is the order of the day. So Raymond Williams writes: "In the present situation, naturalist prose drama, although discredited among a minority, remains the dominant theatrical form." (5)

This is not meant to denounce prose, for prose has its victories probably not much less renowned than those of poetry. But what is poetic drama? Eliot writes: "A verse play is not a play done into verse, but a different kind of play: in a way more realistic than 'naturalistic drama', because, instead of clothing nature in poetry, it should remove the surface of things, expose the underneath, or the inside, of the natural surface appearance.. So the poet with ambitions of the theatre, must discover the laws, both of another kind of verse and of another kind of drama." (6) Yeats remarks: "All imaginative art remains at a distance, and this distance once chosen must be firmly held

against a pushing world. Verse, ritual, music and dance in association with action require that gesture, costume, facial expression, stage arrangement must help in keeping the door." (7)

✓ All this shows the responsibility of the modern poetic dramatist and also exposes the cause of his failure. It is not that poetry cannot produce dramatic tension or reinforce a dramatic situation. In Shakespeare's plays poetry and tension come together ; poetry is not only the medium but also the cause of this tension ; even the rhythm of verse produces it. ✓ The main trouble of poetic drama to-day is the divorce between poetry and drama. Too often the entrance of Poetry means the exit of Drama. The poetic dramatist deliberately presents his chorus-like devices and starts fondling his phrases and lines, allowing his poetry to stop his play. But a play must move on, and only by moving on it can produce that sense of action which is the soul of drama. Chants and rhythmic prose, nursery rhymes and solo songs, masques and masks, pageants and choruses and the archaic remnants of ritual-drama have so far failed to make poetic drama truly dramatic and to establish it. ✓ Poetic drama, as we find it to-day, is certainly a refinement of naturalist prose drama at certain points by the use of poetry and verse. But there is little important development of verse and poetry towards the status of drama. ✓

✓ What are the main problems of modern poetic drama? Naturally, the first question is whether poetic drama can be made to serve all our purposes, to do all that has been done and is being done by prose drama, and more. Eliot says : "I believe...that poetry is the natural and complete medium for drama ; that the prose play is a kind of abstraction capable of giving you only a part of what the theatre can give." (8) But this means the end of prose drama, which

is not desirable and which is not what Eliot means when he wants the poetic dramatist to discover "the laws, both of another kind of verse and of another kind of drama." Even if we admit that prose drama dwells only on "the surface of things," it will endure as long as the surface will remain. Eliot himself is an admirer of "great prose dramatists—such as Ibsen and Chekhov," and one may add a few more names.

Abercrombie states only a part of the general problem when he writes : "One more thing remains to be briefly considered. Can a play written in poetry deal conveniently with contemporary life ? Well, why not ?" (9) But the crux of the problem is *how*, not *why*. Eliot makes a more *positive* approach : "Verse plays, it has been generally held, should either take their subject matter from some mythology, or else should be about some remote historical period, far enough away from the present for the characters...to be licensed to talk in verse...Picturesque period costume renders verse much more acceptable." (10) One may add the special effects of light, sound and decor—any device to make the play and the stage remote enough to make the use of verse natural, credible and convincing. But Eliot's approach does not solve the problem stated by Abercrombie. On the other hand, it shows the limitations of poetic drama. In fact, we are thrown into the position of Yeats : "All imaginative art remains at a distance." There is not a single outstanding example in contemporary poetic drama to prove that this problem has been satisfactorily solved. If we notice anything like the semblance of success it comes through remoteness produced by exotic devices which keep art at a distance.) A play like *The Ascent of F 6* presents contemporary life on two planes—remote and immediate—but the one invades the other causing two many jolts that shake the play to its foundation.

Eliot writes: "If the poetic drama is to reconquer its place, it must, in my opinion, enter into overt competition with prose drama." (11) At the same time he feels the general problem: "What we have to do is to bring poetry into the world in which the audience lives and to which it returns when it leaves the theatre; not to transport the audience into some imaginary world totally unlike its own, an unreal world in which poetry is tolerated." (12) This means, in a way, a change in the spirit of the age, a change in life itself.

There is no reason why poetic drama must enter into competition with prose drama. Prose drama will be written and will be popular, and great dramatists, let us hope, will raise it to a very high level of excellence. Let there be prose plays and verse plays and plays which justify the mixture of verse and prose. The problem and future of poetic drama should be considered independently of the question of any competition.

The medium of poetic drama is our next problem. It is useful to examine, in this connection, some of the views of Eliot. He says that "no play should be written in verse for which prose is *dramatically* adequate." But it is difficult to agree with him without thinking of any competition between prose and verse. Let us be satisfied if poetry does not appear as decoration, if it justifies itself dramatically, independently of what prose does or does not. He also says: "And from this it follows, again, that the audience... should be too intent upon the play to be wholly conscious of the medium." (13) But one cannot even guess the possibilities of drama, of its technique and of the working of a master artist. A dramatist may want his audience to be "wholly conscious of the medium." Shakespeare wanted his audience to be conscious of the change from verse to prose in the Porter Scene in *Macbeth*. Eliot himself refers

to it and dwells on the ironic contrast in a alternation of scenes in prose with scenes in verse in *Henry IV*. The "consciousness of the difference" does not always mean the consciousness of "the play and the language of the play as two separate things."

All art appears to be artificial because all art seeks to concentrate on the essence of life and to establish an order. The essence is the *matter* and the order is the *form*. Eliot writes: "Whether we use prose or verse on the stage, they are both but means to an end." The difference, from one point of view, is not so great as we might think. In those prose plays which survive...the prose in which the characters speak is as remote, for the best part, from the vocabulary, syntax and rhythm of our ordinary speech...as verse is...So if you look at it in this way, it will appear that prose on the stage is as artificial as verse: or alternatively, that verse can be as natural as prose." (14) But here is an apology for the use of verse which is weakened because several considerations have been left out—the degrees of artificiality in prose and verse, the qualitative difference between prose and verse, and the possibility of verse doing the business of prose and something more.

Eliot thinks that a mixture of prose and verse in the same play should be avoided because each transition makes the audience "aware, with a jolt, of the medium." But he attaches undue importance to the jolt and the awareness of the medium. The jolt is certainly not the only reason. On the contrary, sometimes it will be necessary to produce the jolt. A mixture is to be avoided in poetic drama also on other grounds. In the present circumstances the establishment of verse as a convention is nearly as important as the establishment of poetic drama itself. A mixture is likely to be misunderstood; it may mean to some an acknowledgment that verse has failed. In fact, the modern poetic dramatist

uses prose because he is not able to make his verse elastic enough. In poetic drama, which means drama that offers a poetic interpretation of life in verse, it should be possible to produce a jolt or effect a simple transition through a change in the quality and rhythm of verse.

The real problem of the medium is not the mixture of prose with verse but the development of the right verse that serves all dramatic purposes. Eliot admits this difficulty: ".....when we find some situation which is intractable in verse, it is merely that our form of verse is inelastic.....we must either develop our verse, or avoid having to introduce such scenes...But if our verse is to have so wide a range that it can say anything that has to be said, it follows that it will not be 'poetry' all the time." (15) But Shakespeare's verse is not 'poetry' all the time. It is 'poetry', so that it may be truly dramatic. In fact, the best blank verse of Shakespeare is not to be sought only in the passages which are known for their poetry; it is to be studied also in the passages which are very efficient and business-like, passages that compete with good dramatic prose. At the same time it is only fair to admit that writing good dramatic prose is by no means easy. Shaw writes, in his characteristic way, in the preface to his verse-play *The Admirable Bashville*, that he chose to write in blank verse because it is much easier to write it than prose!

Eliot exaggerates the importance of "the unconscious effect of the verse." The ways of poetry are mysterious, and one can never even guess how a miracle is performed by poetry in drama, especially when the response of the audience is at times almost spiritual. There are moments in Shakespeare's plays when one is unconscious of the medium which is verse. All that we are conscious of is the moving drama of life :

Troilus : Let it not be believ'd of womanhood :
 Think that we had mothers ; do not
 give advantage

To stubborn critics, apt without a theme
For depravation, to square the

By Cressid's rule. general sex
Rather think this
- not Cressid.

Ulysses : What hath she done, Prince, that can
soil our mothers ?

Troilus: Nothing at all, unless that this were
she.

(Troilus and Cressida : V, 2.)

But there are also great moments when we are made aware of the presence of poetry, of verse as the medium, independent of the drama of character and situation, and as poetry and drama move together, the consciousness of the effect of verse stimulates our consciousness of drama :

We too alone will sing like birds i' the cage ;
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness : so we 'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and
laugh

At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news ; and we'll talk with
them too,

Who loses and who wins ; who's in, who's out ;
And take upon's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies : and we'll wear out,
In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great
ones.

That ebb and flow by th' moon.
(*King Lear* : V, 2.)

The problem of the medium is also the problem of communication. Eliot says that his first experience in writing dramatic verse was that he was writing for other voices lines aimed to produce an immediate effect on an unknown and unprepared audience. But

this is only a very small part of the problem. Writing dramatic verse is more difficult than writing poetic verse because the dramatist has to be far more alert and flexible. He has to control a much wider range of thoughts and feelings, especially in relation to a number of very different characters and a variety of situations, and has to give to the whole pattern a movement essential to drama. His verse must be very elastic indeed to enable him to meet all the requirements of the stage and acting, including gestures, pauses and movements. Most of our poetic dramatists fail to make their verse serve dramatic purposes with the result that drama becomes 'poetry.'

The verse-medium of the medieval drama was very different from that of the Elizabethan drama. In a way, it seems that it had greater prospects of freedom, especially because of the simplicity of the medieval drama. But the establishment of blank verse in the Elizabethan age was a revolutionary change, and its importance cannot be overestimated. The Elizabethan blank verse with its formal features could be a very great handicap but in the hands of Shakespeare it became surprisingly supple and elastic. The medium that enabled Shakespeare to do the wonders that he did has not been fully analysed. It is useful to study carefully Shakespeare's choice and positioning of words, the degrees of 'poetry' in his verse, its music, its movement, its pauses, variations in rhythm and tone, its relation to voice and gesture—in short, the entire contribution of the verse-pattern to drama and the stage. Even a simple device like ending a speech by breaking the regular line to gain a pause before the line is taken up in the speech of the next speaker shows great variety. Blank verse ensured stability and precision; it established order and discipline; it organized poetic drama. Subsequently, no other verse was competent to take its place, and the new drama has chosen prose.

"I do not suppose," writes Maupassant, "blank verse can profitably be used again, but a quick, running metre like that used by the old Spanish dramatists, though with less frequent rhymes, may well be acceptable." (16) Eliot says: "The problem...is to get away from Shakespeare...That is not so easy... I will wake up to find that I have been writing bad Shakespearean blank verse." (17) It is, however, difficult to believe that blank verse has completely exhausted itself as a dramatic medium. The view that it has lost its flexibility "after extensive use for non-dramatic poetry" is hardly acceptable. It is the poetic dramatist who has failed to make blank verse flexible. It is his failure that makes the rhythm of blank verse seem "too remote from the movement of modern speech."

If blank verse as a convention is rejected, unrhymed verse in lines of varying lengths will be the natural medium of poetic drama. Rhyme, unless it has a special purpose, should be sparingly used. In many modern verse-plays it is a little too frequent. It tends to make verse 'poetry' independent of drama. Besides, rhyme makes the ear expectant, and there is a disappointment when it does not come. It also makes the audience verse-conscious, which may hamper the consciousness of drama. Finally, it breaks the flow of the natural speech-pattern. It causes the very jolt which Eliot wants poetic drama to avoid. It is not difficult to understand why Shakespeare avoided rhyme in his mature plays.

I have mentioned some devices which appear in modern poetic drama. But as the use of the chorus is very common, it is necessary to examine it in detail. In Greece the chorus was very closely related to a ritualistic performance which developed into tragedy. It was an expository device but it had various functions. The ritualistic association and the conditions of the Greek

stage favoured the chorus which became a convention. But as the Greek dramatic art matured, the dramatists found that it was an impediment, and had to reduce its importance. English drama which is very different from Greek drama never accepted the chorus as a convention. The chorus, unless it is very carefully handled, holds up the onward momentum of drama and becomes fatal. Shakespeare aimed at the choral effect sparingly. Some good examples are found in *Richard III* and *Macbeth*. Synge knew how to produce the right choral effect even without using the chorus, as in *Riders to the Sea*:
 ---[She pauses again with her hand stretched out towards the door. It opens softly and old women begin to come in, crossing themselves on the threshold, and kneeling in front of the stage, with red petticoats on their heads...]

Cathleen : Is it Bartley it is ?

One of the Women : It is surely. God rest his soul.

[..Then men carry in the body of Bartley and they lay it on the table.]

Cathleen : What way was he drowned ?

One of the Women : The grey pony knocked him out into the sea, and he was washed out where there is a great surf on the white rocks.

[The women are keening softly and swaying themselves with a slow movement. Cathleen and Nora kneel at the other end of the table. The men kneel near the door.]

But the devices which appear in modern poetic drama are hardly dramatic. On the other hand, such contrivances are attempts to produce remoteness to justify the appearance of poetry and verse. Art becomes showmanship. In *The Ascent of F 6* the play is hardly "the thing", and devices come to be more important than drama. One cannot see the wood for the trees. The failure to produce straightforward poetic drama is painfully obvious.

Elizabethan drama had its problems and shortcomings, and critics like Sidney and Jonson were very critical indeed, and yet Elizabethan drama, even if we exclude Shakespeare, is great enough. There is hope for poetic drama in our time, even if we do not think of Eliot and Fry. I shall choose some minor plays for discussion, for minor attempts are sometimes more significant than major achievements. *The Purification*, a one-act tragedy by Tennessee Williams, is a play of crime and trial, and its simple poetic interpretation of life reminds us of the tragedies of Lorca. There is fusion of poetry and drama in its manner of unfolding action and characters, and its verse is elastic enough to produce tension and relaxation. *Step-in-the-Hollow* by Donagh Macdonagh is good fun. It is not poetic drama; it is versification of naturalist drama. It could be written in prose but much of its wit lies in making verse do the work of prose. Its verse, though not poetic, has an air of efficiency and has no difficulty in creating and controlling characters and situations and in making the play move on all the time. Eliot says : "It seems to me that if we are to have a poetic drama, it is more likely to come from poets learning how to write plays than from skilful prose dramatists learning to write poetry." (18) *The Purification* comes from a leading American prose dramatist. Eliot says : "A really dramatic verse can be employed...to say the most matter-of-fact things." (19) The "most matter-of-fact" things have been said quite tellingly by the verse of *Step-in-the-Hollow*, an Irish play.

II

Murder in the Cathedral is the result of a long preparation. Before the great dramatic revival there was hardly any drama in the nineteenth century, and the craving for drama was partially satisfied not only in the poetic

drama of the Victorians but also in their non-dramatic poetry. The dramatic quality is now quite strong in poetry, and the poetry of Eliot, like the poetry of Browning, shows this quality. There are three distinct elements: attention to dramatic structure (*The Waste Land*); dramatisation of consciousness (*Gerontion*); dramatic combination of character, situation and speech (*Portrait of a Lady*). Eliot's critical writings bear witness to his great interest in poetic drama. His introduction to *Savonarola*, a play written by his mother in rhymed couplets, shows his growing belief. The general feeling that prose drama was exhausted acted as an impetus, and the failure of several serious attempts by his contemporaries to revive poetic drama was a useful lesson. Then came *Sweeney Agonistes* as an experiment and feeler. *The Rock*, a pageant, and "Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry", an essay, seeking to recover the lost link between ritual and drama in the mass liturgy, are more significant because both show a distinct move towards religious drama. Eliot's frequent references to *Everyman* in his critical writings prove that he carefully studied its allegory, dramatic pattern and verse. Then came *Murder in the Cathedral* followed by a lecture on religious drama, medieval and modern, which is a clear statement of what religious drama means to Eliot. The religious interest which is so strong in Eliot's non-dramatic poetry finds a dramatic expression in the play.

But *Murder in the Cathedral* is an exceptional play, and its success is negative. It has achieved success by avoiding the problems of modern poetic drama, not by solving them. Eliot himself admits that "the play was a dead end". It has a natural remoteness and a basis in a great Christian tradition, and as a religious play of a very special kind it will be always enjoyed on a special stage by a special audience. For the very same reasons

it makes successful use of a special kind of poetry which, though not strictly dramatic, has a charm of its own. It is ritual drama, and it is *participation* drama for it invites the audience to participate in an act of worship. Though its theme is remote, its appeal is immediate and quick. It gives a new meaning to drama and makes it a fresh experience. It has a great beauty of design, and the design is very unusual. It takes the chorus from Greek drama but does not follow the convention of divisions, and it rejects the unities of time and place. Then very boldly it passes from classical drama to medieval drama, and its relation to the medieval stage, choir and congregation is quite obvious. Its characters are more abstract than concrete but rather different from the characters of the *Morality* play. It is a subtle variation on the pattern of allegory, symmetry and balance of the *Morality*. It rejects blank verse as a regular medium and uses the verse of *Everyman*, prose and rhyme, alliteration and the rhythm of hymns and chants. Its language has a deliberate design of imagery and a calculated neutrality because, as Eliot himself explains, it is "committed neither to the present nor to the past". But all this was of very great use "only in one play and of no use for any other". *Murder in the Cathedral* is a dangerous model, and any imitation of it is likely to end in disaster.

St. Joan is not religious drama; its stress is on the role of Joan in medieval history, and the tragic pattern of pity and irony in the epilogue is meant to be a lesson to the twentieth century. The human tragedy of Joan is an integral part of the dramatic substance. *Murder in the Cathedral* is very different from *St. Joan*. Eliot writes: "I did not want to write a chronicle of twelfth-century politics, nor did I want to tamper unscrupulously with the meagre records... I wanted to concentrate on death and martyr-

dom". (19) This theme of martyrdom, in terms of dramatic action, is: "A man comes home foreseeing that he will be killed, and he is killed". (20) There is no emphasis on history or on the human tragedy of Becket; the play dramatises the experience of martyrdom.

"Yeats complains that 'nowhere has the author explained how Becket and the King differ in aim.'" This is, according to Raymond Williams, "confusing history with a situation that defines an 'experience' for 'the death serves as an expression of the permanent experience of martyrdom.'" (21) It is true that there is enough history in the speeches of the chorus, priests, tempters, knights and Becket himself. But it is equally true that the conflict which has given rise to the drama of martyrdom has not been dramatically motivated because the difference between the aims of Becket and those of Henry has not been made clear. This certainly weakens the work as drama; Henry is the real antagonist, though he does not appear in the play; the knights are only agents. Yeats goes to a level deeper than Becket's *deeds* that roused the wrath of Henry; he wants a dramatic explanation of the difference between their *aims* which is the deeper cause of the conflict.

Though *Murder in the Cathedral* is a religious play, it is not possible to eliminate altogether certain considerations of history. Was the Becket of history a martyr in the sense in which Eliot has made *his* Becket a martyr? Did Becket really foresee his death? Did he come back only to seek martyrdom or was there some other purpose? Such questions will be asked, and there is not enough material in the play to answer such questions. But these problems do not seriously affect the design of the play which is sufficiently clear. A more serious defect is a certain lack of clarity in the presentation of Becket—

not because, as Yeats complains, the difference between the aims has not been made clear. ✓

The inner drama of *Murder in the Cathedral* lies in the character of Becket and its development towards martyrdom. Becket returns to England to seek martyrdom, though a little inconsistently he says:

Never again, you must make no doubt,
Shall the sea run between the shepherd and
his fold.

But he is a proud man. The idea of pride may have ~~have~~ come from the Morality; it may have been suggested also by *St. Joan* (22) in which it appears more than once, and which Eliot studied carefully, as he himself admits. Becket's purification comes in the temptation episode, and the sermon states what Becket has achieved—knowledge of true martyrdom, which is possible only when the purification is complete. But the post-purification speeches and conduct of Becket are not sufficiently distinguished to show that a great change has actually taken place. In fact, there is discrepancy between what Becket says in the last passage of the temptation episode and the sermon and what he does and says later. Even loss of "will in the will of God" is not sufficiently borne out by his subsequent speeches and deeds. When the knights threaten Becket and leave the stage, he says:

Death will come only when I am worthy,
And if I am worthy, there is no danger.
I have therefore only to make perfect my will.

This means that he has a will of his own and that it has not been perfected. The following passages and the situations in which they appear cause further confusion:

But if you kill me, I shall rise from my tomb
To submit my cause before God's throne.

And I would no longer be denied ; all things
Proceed to a joyful consummation.

You, Reginald, three times traitor you :
Traitor to me as my temporal vassal,
Traitor to me as your spiritual lord,
Traitor to God in desecrating His Church.

If it is contended that the purification continued even after the temptation episode and the sermon and was completed just before death, Becket's "No !" and "Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain" (in the temptation episode) and his declaration that "in a short time you may have yet another martyr" (in the sermon) lose much of their significance.

Let us not think of the Becket of history. But the question is : did Eliot's Becket conquer his pride ? "Humility", says Eliot in his Shakespeare Association Lecture, "is the most difficult of all virtues to achieve." In the same lecture he says that Shakespeare borrowed from Seneca, for the benefit of some of his tragic heroes, an attitude of "self-dramatization," which is "the refuge for the individual in an indifferent and hostile world." Did Becket conquer "the human will to see things as they are not," "this individualism, this vice of Pride" ? In the sermon and subsequent speeches Becket betrays an ego, a refined ego, a kind of self-consciousness which is not very different from that of Othello or Hamlet in their last speeches, and which is, on the spiritual plane, a more subtle foe (to borrow the phrase of Donne) than the fourth tempter :

I have spoken to you to-day, dear children of God, of the martyrs of the past, asking you to remember, especially our martyr of Canterbury, the blessed Archbishop Elphegè...and because, dear children, I do not think I shall ever

preach to you again ; and because it is possible that in a short time you may have yet another martyr, and that one perhaps not the last. I would have you keep in your hearts these words that I say, and think of them at another time.

Is it very different from Othello's "Soft you ; a word or two before you go." ? Is the gesture very different from Hamlet's farewell to life ?

In the introduction to the Oxford Book of Modern Verse Yeats wrote : "Passive suffering is not a theme of poetry." And yet Eliot has nearly always sought poetry in passivity, in visions of decay and desolation, and it is this poetry which appears in *Murder in the Cathedral*, and both Becket and the women are passive sufferers under "the design of God." The excessive stress on fatalism and passivity has taken away much of drama from the play and much of the joy of martyrdom. The joy of a martyr is neither the zeal of a fanatic nor the extinction of all interests. It lies in calm and willing submission to the will of God.

In commenting on the key passage in which activity and passivity are identified Mathiessen writes : "The firmness of its doctrine reveals how far Eliot has advanced in his possession of Dante's conception of grace." (23) He also quotes a passage from Jonathan Edwards, which is, however, slightly different from what Eliot says. The idea is very common in Indian philosophy—the Upanishads and the Gita—and it is likely that Eliot has been influenced also by the Indian doctrine. In fact, he made use of some Upanishadic doctrines in *The Waste Land* (1922). The passage is closely related to the conception of martyrdom which appears in the sermon. Becket says :

For my lord I am now ready to die,
That his Church may have peace and
liberty.

After his death the third priest declares that "the Church is stronger for this action." But neither the conception of martyrdom nor what Becket or the priest says makes it dramatically clear how Becket's death or martyrdom will bring peace and liberty and strength to the Church. The concluding part of the play is thus somewhat weakened. ✓

Becket is the only dramatic character in the play. The women constitute the formal chorus but others are also more or less choral figures. The priests are the voices of the Church, while the tempters are the voices of Becket—voices from within. The knights are the voices of the king and are reduced to views, especially in their prose speeches. There is little characterisation in *Murder in the Cathedral* which is an exceptional play. The groups are, however, carefully chosen. The women are the people; the priests are the Church; feudalism appears in the knights; the tempters are the inner enemies rising from the self and showing the stages of Becket's development towards martyrdom. But Becket stands alone, and his loneliness is the loneliness of a saint and martyr, which Shaw has so dramatically brought out in *St. Joan*. (24) He is very different from these groups and rises superior to each of them. ✓ The conflict between the State and the Church leads to his death, and as he dies, the knights retire after acknowledging that he "was, after all, a great man", and the stamp of his personality is left on the third priest. *Murder in the Cathedral* is a one-man play, but within the framework of ritualistic drama it shows the marks of a true tragedy. ✓

Like the early Attic tragedy *Murder in the Cathedral* is a choric play; it depends very largely on the chorus. The formal chorus of Canterbury women is not divided in the Greek manner. But this is not the only difference. The play has more than one chorus. The priests and the tempters have

choric functions, and sometimes they are openly choral. The four tempters form a chorus when they say: "Man's life is a cheat and disappointment." The three priests form a chorus when they say: "O Thomas, my lord, do not fight the intractable tide." Then the women, the priests and the tempters speak alternately: "Is it the owl that calls... and feel the cold in his groin." Even the knights form themselves into a chorus more than once:

You are his servant, his tool and his jack,
You wore his favours on your back....
Creeping out of the London dirt,
Crawling up like a louse on your shirt ..

Where is Becket, the traitor to the King?
Where is Becket, the meddling priest?
Come down Daniel to the lions' den,
Come down Daniel for the mark of the beast.

That the characters are meant to be choric is clear because Eliot makes hardly any attempt to differentiate them as characters or individuals. There is only differentiation of moods, views and functions. ✓

✓ Eliot's non-dramatic poetry, as in *Portrait of a Lady*, *Gerontion* and *A Song for Simeon*, is largely passive; it is the poetry of waiting and watching, despair and suffering, a vision of decay and disintegration. This poetry reappears in the chorus. It is not perhaps very wrong to think that the choice of the poor and helpless women for the chorus has been influenced by the demands of this kind of poetry. One feels sometimes that the chorus is used in certain situations mainly to provide for such poetry. The emotional and intellectual range of the chorus is naturally limited but as an expository device the chorus supplies quite adequately the political and social context with a stress on the suffering of the people. It also shows the hold that Becket had on his people, thus giving an important

emotional quality to the play. A large part of its contribution lies in the creation of an atmosphere of premonition and fear, sorrow and suffering, foreboding and resignation. The women only wait and watch and feel with Becket that the doom comes nearer. Then there is the sense of horror followed by the sense of defilement and of the need for purification. The Te Deum chorus transcends horror and sorrow, and with the confirmation of faith comes the "Peace which passeth understanding." The play begins and ends with the chorus.

There is an excessive emphasis on the passivity and distress of the chorus, and there is hardly any relaxation. Again, as long as the chorus is kept on the planes of emotions and sensations, its tone is convincing but there is a change in the Dies Irae chorus which rises to an intellectual level :

And behind the face of Death the Judgement
And behind the Judgement the void, more
horrid than active shapes of hell ;
Emptiness, absence, separation from God,...
Where the soul is no longer deceived, for
there are no objects, no tones:...

It is great poetry but its assignment to the "foolish" and "hysterical" women of Canterbury may be questioned. The choral passage following the departure of the knights who depart only to "come with swords" is one of the weakest parts of the play. That the "senses are quickened" by a feeling of premonition is a fact. That the senses are stronger in animals and birds than in men is a fact. It is easy to understand that animal forces are active in the drama of martyrdom and that the sense of horror and aversion is quite natural. It is also a fact that Eliot planned his chorus to be a group of "excited and sometimes hysterical women." In fact, they are the only women in the play, and this is

dramatically important for more than one reason. But nothing can defend the deliberate (so deliberate as to be mechanical) and inordinate emphasis on the senses, on the images of animals, birds and other creatures—there are at least sixteen references—and on the images of nausea and disgust—there are at least seven references—which produce no legitimate poetic or dramatic effect. Such images do appear in the non-dramatic poetry of Eliot, but in a more restrained manner and within reasonable limits, as in *Gerontion* and *Whispers of Immortality*. The "loon" may be excused; its appearance at the moment may be justified. But there is no convincing reason why the poor women of Canterbury should be made to be interested in a "jerboa" which is a desert rodent. It is true that Canterbury is situated near the sea, and this probably accounts for the use of some of the sea images in the play, but to make the women lie on the floor of the sea to experience the "ingurgitation of the sponge" is hardly fair.

The chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* has great lyrical beauty, and the music of its poetry is reinforced by choir-songs. Raymond Williams thinks that the chorus is also "a link between ritual and believers." He says: "Chorus is choir, the articulate voice of the body of worshippers." But this is true only of the Te Deum chorus. Eliot writes: "The use of the chorus strengthened the power and concealed the defects of my theatrical technique." (26) The chorus is certainly the strength of *Murder in the Cathedral*. But the chorus is also its weakness. It appears before or after a dramatic situation, serving very often as a lyrical link between episodes, and as it is not integrated into the play, the choral passages are easily detachable. But a more serious defect is the undue length of some of the choruses which painfully halt the movement of drama. As the knights leave the stage to "come with swords", there is a great

dramatic moment, a moment taut with suspense, excitement and expectancy. Just then comes the long choral passage on the quickening of the senses. Equally detrimental to the dramatic movement is the length of the passage on defilement and purification at the moment of Becket's death. The stage direction itself sounds rather absurd: "While the Knights kill him we hear the chorus." When we examine the blanks in dramatic movement or action caused by the chorus we find its weakness. Had the chorus been allowed to take part in action it could have been much more effective.

Eliot's writings show his great interest in the form of drama. In his radio talk he said: "...we have to make use of suggestions from remote drama, too remote for there to be any danger of imitation, such as *Everyman*, and the late medieval morality and mystery plays, and the great Greek dramatists." (27) In the structure of his play Eliot makes use of suggestions from these sources. *Murder in the Cathedral* does not observe the Greek unities of time and place. But its chorus is largely Greek. The play has a certain quality of tenseness which results from the Greek method of concentrating on the last phase in the career of the hero. But this concentration also appears in *Everyman*. Martin Browne rightly observes: "*Everyman* has the further advantage that its action is concentrated: instead of trying to trace the fortune of mankind through a whole lifetime, it begins at the point where man is confronted with Death, and this gives to the whole play an urgency lacking from some of the other Moralities." (28) In *Agamemnon* the theme of the return of a doomed leader of men shows a dramatic fusion of tragic pity and tragic irony. Eliot's play has a similar theme on the religious plane, and though there is little scope for the use of irony in religious drama, the tragic significance is quite clear. The

stress on premonition is a common feature of Greek tragedies but it has been exaggerated in Eliot's play. Fatalism which is quite strong in some Greek plays appears without any conflict in *Murder in the Cathedral* and has been made a part of the general pattern of religious experience. It is necessary for us to note these points which are closely related to the form of the play.

¶ The Morality play follows the medieval literary tradition of allegory. It is, as Browne explains, "an allegory, in which figures representing Virtues and Vices, forces of good and evil, contend for man's soul. Dramatically, this type of play has severe limitations, for no character can behave unexpectedly." (29) In the temptation episode Eliot follows the broad structure of the Morality but he differs in the details. He does not use the traditional figures and he does not give his figures any names; he calls them Tempters. He makes no use of the traditional pattern of conflict between the forces of good and evil. The conflict is different. It is between Becket and his pride (which is also a craving for power and glory) to show the development of his career towards martyrdom. The temptation episode stresses the importance of self-knowledge which enables Becket to grasp the true conception and significance of martyrdom—'the design of God' and the loss of "will in the will of God." The next stage is martyrdom. The temptation episode is the dramatisation of the experience of self-knowledge, while the knights come to dramatise martyrdom itself. Eliot's treatment is more psychological than that in the Morality because the force of evil has been made an intimate part of the career and character of Becket. This treatment also reveals the earlier stages of his life which have not been dramatised in the play. The temptations not only explain the different stages of Becket's life but also go deeper and deeper

into his character till the subtle vice of doing "the right deed for the wrong reason" is fully exposed. The first three temptations are material—Pleasure, Power (Chancellorship) and Power (Alliance with the barons). The fourth temptation is spiritual; it is a shrewd form of pride and power closely related to a craving for the "perpetual glory" of martyrdom. Mathiessen calls it a temptation to the proud mind to become so confident in its wisdom that it seeks—and takes for granted—a martyr's crown as its reward. But it is not wisdom. It is once again power, the proud and therefore sinful consciousness of holding spiritual power :

No ! Shall I, who keep the keys
Of heaven and hell...
Descend to desire a punier power ?

The fourth tempter flings back at Becket not only his first speech in the play ("They know and do not know for ever still.") but also the line : "You hold the keys of heaven and hell." Then he tempts Becket :

Power to bind and loose...
You hold the skein : wind, Thomas, wind
The thread of eternal life and death.
You hold this power, hold it.

Then come two great passages drawing out the secret thoughts of Becket—"You have also thought..." and "Yes, Thomas, yes...". The fourth temptation is a cruel assault, and Becket stands stunned by the sudden revelation :

I have thought of these things.

Then in despair he questions :

But what is there to do ? What is left
to be done ?

Is there no enduring crown to be won ?

But even as he reels, he rallies, and then comes the "No !"—the "Everlasting No" (to borrow the phrase of Carlyle), and the temptation episode becomes a dramatic ritual of purification.

But the temptations offer certain difficulties which arise from a certain lack of clarity in the conception and presentation of the tempters. The Morality presents the forces of good and evil, though subjective, as objective and concrete figures on the stage. But in *Murder in the Cathedral* the tempters are not strictly traditional figures. Producers will have their own plans of presentation. But there is nothing in the text to make the position clear. Are the tempters wholly subjective ? Are they equally subjective ? Does the manner of presentation cross the strict border-line between the subjective and the objective ? The first tempter :

Here I have come, forgetting all acrimony...
Your Lordship won't forget that evening
on the river
When the king, and you and I were all
friends together ?

The second tempter :

We met at Clarendon, at Northampton,
And last at Montmirail, in Maine.

The third tempter :

I am a rough straightforward Englishman.

It is possible to interpret these passages on the subjective plane but they have a certain objective emphasis which may cause some confusion. If the tempters are wholly subjective, only abstractions, their combination with the objective figures of the chorus and priests

in the passage, "Is it the owl.....groin" is hardly convincing. There cannot be, however, any question about the subjectivity of the fourth tempter.

Eliot says: "A man comes home foreseeing that he will be killed, and he is killed." Becket says: "All things prepare the event, watch." Evidently, then, Becket came because he sought martyrdom, and he was prepared. To go back to a life of pleasure, to resume the role of the Chancellor, to arrange a coalition with the barons—such thoughts were not in his mind. He had in his mind only a craving for the glory and power of a martyr. Why, then, do the first three tempters appear and why did Becket expect them? There can be no question about the unexpected fourth visitor whose appearance is a dramatic necessity. If it is said that the first three tempters appear because there was in Becket's mind a faint consciousness of the possibility of the recurrence of the first three temptations, it is difficult to explain the great stress which has been laid on this part of the episode. Again, it cannot be said that the first three tempters come to present a picture of the earlier stages of Becket's life, because this is done in the speeches of the messenger, the priests and Becket himself.

The larger part of the temptation episode is a blank for the chorus and the priests, which is a problem to the producer and the actors. The chorus and the priests remain in the background and have nothing to do. As each tempter finishes his business, he joins the group of silent figures, swelling the number. Keeping a large number of characters detached for a long time from what happens on the stage is certainly very awkward. In fact, there are only two active figures at a time—Becket and a tempter. When Becket delivers his last speech, which is fairly long, there are thirteen inactive

figures (if the chorus is composed of six women) on the stage. Such blanks are very frequent in *Murder in the Cathedral* and expose the weakness of Eliot's theatrical technique. Then there are the long group-speeches that halt the dramatic movement. The following lines in the group-speech of the four tempters come unexpectedly and are too light for a serious situation:

The Catherine wheel, the pantomime cat,
The prizes given at the children's party,
The prize awarded for the English Essay....

The sullen humour of the second priest who scolds the chorus just before the arrival of Becket is much better:

You go on croaking like frogs in the treetops:
But frogs at last can be cooked and eaten.

The sermon as an interlude has not received the critical attention which it deserves. It is very natural and dramatic, and it is historical. Its emotional value is great, and it is a legitimate dramatic preparation for the episode of murder and martyrdom. Taken as an address to the chorus, it justifies the presence of the women on the stage. Taken as an address to the audience, it establishes an intimate link between the stage and the audience—a link which has a thrill of its own—and like the *Te Deum* chorus it intensifies the religious atmosphere of the stage and auditorium and strengthens *Murder in the Cathedral* as participation-drama.

The sermon is an integral part of the play because it explains the significance of the theme of martyrdom. It explains "the deep meaning and mystery of our masses of Christmas day." It explains the Christian idea of peace which is "not peace as the world goes"—a message which the Christian world

certainly needed in 1935. The sermon also points out that it is not an accident "that the day of the first martyr follows immediately the day of the Birth of Christ." Here is a preparation for what Becket says in his first speech after the second entrance of the knights :

His blood given to buy my life,
My blood given to pay for His death.

The sermon shows clearly that *Murder in the Cathedral* is ritualistic drama. The relation between the sermon and the temptation episode is very clear. The conception of martyrdom is a purged version of Becket's earlier notion. It stresses the idea that martyrdom is the result of the "design of God" and loss of "will in the will of God." The fourth tempter says :

Seek the way of martyrdom, make
yourself the lowest
On earth, to be high in heaven.

The sermon repeats the idea in almost the same language : "...so in Heaven the Saints are most high, having made themselves most low." The only difference is that now there is no pride, no power, no will.

It is very easy to interpret Becket's martyrdom as "senseless self-slaughter". In fact, this view appears more than once. The tempters declare in a choric passage :

This man is obstinate, blind, intent
On self-destruction.

The fourth knight's verdict is : "Suicide while of unsound mind." It is therefore probable that Eliot means the last part of the sermon to be a re-statement in clear prose of what Becket says in his last speech in the temptation episode. Though an address to the public, the sermon is to Becket himself a soliloquy by which he assures himself that he

is delivered and that never again will he make a mistake because he has learnt how to do the right deed for the *right* reason.

The sermon is a relaxation without a jolt. Its prose has the dignity of restraint and a beauty born of simplicity. It has a great emotional appeal which a good actor will easily convey by suitable pauses and by changing the pitch of his voice and giving it a slight tremor at the right moments. Eliot remarks : "A sermon cast in verse is too unusual an experience for even the most regular church-goer." (30) A sermon in poetic drama is an exceptional case, and *Murder in the Cathedral* is an exceptional play.

In a prefatory note Eliot writes : "In the second edition a chorus was substituted for the introits which, in the first edition, constituted the opening of Part II. To this third edition the introits have been added as an appendix, and may be used instead of that chorus in productions of this play." Part II in the third edition opens with a choric passage which is an echo of a part of the sermon :

Is there not peace upon earth, good will
among men ?

Again, the priests become choric before the entrance of the knights, which means that the choral element becomes excessive. The lines assigned to the priests are appropriate, and the introits are effective variations. But if we drop the opening chorus and retain the introits the opening of Part II becomes too long. The opening of Part II is a problem.

The knights constitute the last force of opposition as a prelude to martyrdom. The other forces of opposition are the chorus, the priests and the tempters. Each group offers obstruction in its own way and produces a sense of conflict. But Becket rises superior to each group and moves towards martyrdom which is "the design of God." There is an

interesting link between the tempters and the knights. The temptations re-appear as charges and threats ; the substance remains unchanged. The causal relation is quite clear. It is because Becket has conquered the temptations that he is able to defy the knights. His victory on the internal plane is the cause of his victory on the external plane. The tempters by trying to persuade him give him his self-knowledge, and the knights by murdering him make him a martyr. The episode of martyrdom is the fulfilment of the temptation episode.

The two groups are, in a way, largely identical. The first knight says : "I am not myself qualified to put our case to you. I am a man of action, and not of words." The first knight is blunt ; he is incapable of thinking ; he lives on the level of the senses ; his action is only a series of deeds without thoughts. The first tempter appears on the plane of the senses and tries to lure Becket to a life of pleasure : "Fluting in the meadows, viols in the hall." The second knight says : "Our King...intended that Becket...should unite the offices of Chancellor and Archbishop ...he resigned the office of Chancellor." The second tempter says : "The Chancellorship that you resigned...still may be regained." The third tempter wants Becket to hold power through an alliance with the barons. The third knight is Baron William de Traci. The fourth tempter's advice is : "Seek the way of martyrdom." The fourth knight's inference is that "he had determined upon a death by martyrdom." If the actors who appear as the tempters only change their dresses and re-appear as the knights, the significance of the link may be easily communicated. The link between the two episodes is an excellent dramatic device and gives a peculiar unity to the play. But is the link only an after-thought ? It does not appear in the verse-passages ; it is made clear, after the death of

Becket, in the prose-speeches of the knights. Eliot has spoiled his device by not using it at an earlier stage.

The knights' addresses are a serious blemish. Referring to the use of platform prose Eliot writes : "I may, for aught I know, have been slightly under the influence of *St. Joan*." But *St. Joan* is very different ; it is not religious drama like *Murder in the Cathedral*. There is little doubt that Eliot thought not only of the prose of Shaw but also of his epilogue. But the epilogue, which skilfully uses the medieval dream-tradition—and therefore it stands detached from the body of a naturalist play—to present a picture of the posthumous career of Joan within a tragic pattern of pity and irony, is a dramatic necessity. The addresses add nothing essential and do not grow dramatically out of the situation. Eliot's defence that the use of platform prose is a "trick" meant "to shock the audience out of their complacency" is hardly convincing because a shock of this kind is an injury to religious drama. Again, the addresses halt the natural movement of the play towards the end. That movement after a very long break caused by the clean-and-wash chorus and the knights' speeches, is taken up by the first priest. But the damage is done. There is little or no drama left after the death of Becket, and the *Te Deum* chorus is too long. ✓ v. 52

✓ For a religious play *Murder in the Cathedral* is a very unusual title. It reminds one too readily of crime fiction, an Agatha Christie novel. Some of the lines in the knights' addresses seem to be significant. The first knight refers to the principle of "Trial by Jury." The fourth knight asks in the manner of a crime novelist : "Who killed the Archbishop ?" He believes that the death of Becket is a case of "Suicide while of Unsound Mind." This is cheap wit. Equally cheap is the sudden and unexpected gibe, "though

sightseers come with guide-books looking over it" in the Te Deum chorus. ✓

Let us now examine some features of Eliot's language and verse, most of which appear in his non-dramatic poetry but show a tendency towards mannerisms in *Murder in the Cathedral*. Repetition is very regular, so regular as to be almost mechanical. The recurrence of certain words and images seeks to emphasise a mood or the significance of a character or situation. Words like *clean, death, destiny, doom, fear, pride, void, wait, wash, watch, wheel* and *will* appear again and again; in the first chorus alone *wait* appears 14 times. Images of animals and birds and other creatures are very frequent—*ape, bear, beetle, boar, crow, hyaena, jackal, jackass, jackdaw, jerboa, kite, leopard, lobster, loon, mouse, owl, oyster, rat, viper, whelk* and *wolf*. While alliteration frequently sets a pattern of sounds, repetition of words often serves as a substitute for alliteration and gives a certain rhythm to some passages like "Ill the wind, ill the time ...and grey the sky, grey grey grey." Lines like "Living and partly living" are repeated to produce various effects. Refrains appear sometimes with great effect, as in the tippy verse of the knights or in the introit sections of Part II. Occasionally a chiasmic change in the order of words appears: "...the air is heavy and thick. Thick and heavy the sky." "As oak and stone; stone and oak decay."

Second Priest : Your Lordship will find
your rooms in order as you left them.

Thomas : And will try to leave them in order
as I find them.

Eliot says : "The rhythm of regular blank verse had become too remote from the movement of modern speech. Therefore what I kept in mind was the versification of *Everyman*." (31) But blank verse is not altogether avoided. Eliot found "some use of alliteration, and occasional unexpected rhyme" very helpful.

But these are not the only devices. His lines are of greatly varying lengths, the variations being prompted by the internal necessity of moods and feelings and the external necessity of acting and adjustment to natural breath-lengths. Unrhymed verse is more frequent than rhymed verse but his unrhymed verse is sometimes so dexterously prepared that one does not feel the absence of rhyme. There are various kinds of rhyme, including internal rhymes and assonance-rhymes of vowels or consonants. Sprung rhythm, rhythmic prose and cadences and echoes of hymns and anthems are also used. The following passages, in addition to those already quoted, will serve as examples of Eliot's verse :

If you ask my opinion, I think that this peace
Is nothing like an end or like a beginning...
My Lord, he said, I leave you as a man
Whom in this life I shall not see again.

The New Year waits, breathes, waits,
whispers in darkness.

For a little time the hungry hawk
Will only soar and hover, circling lower...
End will be simple, sudden, God-given:

Spring has come in winter. Snow in the
branches
Shall float as sweet as blossoms. Ice along
the ditches
Mirror the sunlight.

To be master or servant within an hour,
This is the course of temporal power.
The Old King shall know it, when at last
breath,
No sons, no empire, he bites broken teeth.

All my life they have been coming, these feet.
All my life
I have waited.

"You came clothed with the virtue of humility...you have stained yourself with the sin of pride." "Pride will have a fall, Joan." "...and yet you say you are not proud and disobedient." Scene VI : Joan—"...have I not been punished for my vanity?" (23) F. O. Mathiessen : The Achievement of T. S. Eliot. (24) Scene V : The Archbishop -- "You stand alone : absolutely alone...But you will be none the less alone." Joan—"I am alone on earth : I have always been alone...my loneliness shall be my strength too." (25) Same as (5). (26) Same as (10). (27) Same as (8). (28) & (29) Introduction : Religious Drama (Vol. 2). (30) & (31) Same as (10).

Joseph Warton And The Romantic Heresy That Pope Was Not A Poet

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One of the principal failings of romantic criticism was its intolerance of Augustan poetry (this in part is the explanation of some modern critics' intolerance of romantic criticism), and Victorian criticism was in this matter generally content to restate—at times, to restate with added emphasis—the romantic position. A candid expression of the romantic position will be found in the *Edinburgh Review* whose representative character as “a critical and political journal” was stressed by Maurice Cross in his *Selections from it* (4 vols., 1833). In the opinion of the *Edinburgh Review*, the writers of the age of Queen Anne “had not a great deal more than their judgment and industry to stand on.” As poets, “they had no force or greatness of fancy—no pathos, and no enthusiasm”; and their inspiration “is little more than a sprightly sort of good sense.” Their work, which has all the lesser virtues clarity, neatness, sagacity and wit—is devoid of imagination and feeling. They “may pass well enough for sensible and polite writers,—scarcely for men of genius.”¹ Coleridge confessed in *Biographia Literaria* that he had in his youth “withheld” from Pope and others

the name of poets, because their “matter and diction [had] seemed” to him “characterised not so much by poetic thoughts, as by thoughts translated into the language of poetry.”² Leigh Hunt’s anthology of English poetry, *Imagination and Fancy* (1844), gave selections from Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare Ben Jonson, some of the Jacobean dramatists, Milton, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats; the period from 1660 to 1800 was unrepresented. But some of the romantic critics were prepared to be just to Pope (Byron indeed was more than just, partly from an aversion to contemporary poetry), whereas Matthew Arnold simply said that Dryden and Pope were “the classics” of English prose (a judgement described by W. P. Ker as “a double sin in criticism,” because it “confuses the kinds in two ways; ignoring their poetry and prose alike.”³)

It was assumed in much romantic and Victorian criticism that poetry (we are quoting Leavis) “must be the direct expression of simple emotions, and these of a limited class: the tender, the exalted, the poignant, and, in general, the sympa-

1 “Changes in the Character of English Poetry from the Reign of Queen Anne to the Present Times,” September 1816 (*Selections from the Edinburgh Review* ed. Maurice Cross, London, 1833 4 vols.; I, 351).

2 *The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. W.G.T. Shedd (New York), III, 155. Hazlitt, whose essay “My First Acquaintance with

Poets,” (1823) will interest students of Coleridge’s criticism, noted that the latter “spoke with contempt of Gray, and with intolerance of Pope.” (*English Critical Essays: Nineteenth Century*, ed. E.D. Jones (“The World’s Classics,” 1916, rept. 1935), pp. 187-188,

3 Ker, “Pope,” *The Art of Poetry* (Oxford, 1923), p. 97.

thetic." 1 What was not in an obvious sense 'simple, sensuous and passionate' was not poetry (Augustan poetry, for example.)

Leavis selects Joseph Warton's *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* as the work which contains perhaps the "earliest formulation" 2 of what, according to the romantics, is, and what is not, poetry. He quotes among others the passage where Warton, after distinguishing between "a Man of Wit," "a Man of Sense," and "a True Poet" goes on to say that Donne and Swift "were undoubtedly men of wit, and men of sense," but that they had not left us any "Pure Poetry." It has indeed been usual to think that Warton taught his age to regard Pope as unpoetical. This, we submit, is hardly fair to Warton (or to his age). In his defence it may be said that the failure to understand Donne had been general in the history of criticism till our century, and that it was not the peculiar failing of any age; it does not make of Warton a romantic critic—a persona non grata with many. 3 It is true that Warton does not place Dryden and Pope in the first rank of English poets with Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton; who would, in fact? But the reader of Warton's *Essay* is not left in doubt that its writer considered Pope to be a poet, and a great poet too—a poet great enough to exact from him the tribute of two big volumes of criticism, 4 conscious as he was of his inferiority to Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton. We should remember that the passage in the *Dedication* which distinguishes between a Man of Wit, a Man of Sense, and a True Poet—between didactic poetry which is

knowledge and wisdom "expressed with the utmost elegance and brevity," and true poetry of which the most important mark is "a creative and glowing Imagination" 5—does *not* put Pope in the former class. Apart from Donne (whom Warton did not understand any more than many others both before and after him), Swift, Fontenelle and La Motte alone are cited in this passage as men of wit and sense from whom the name of poets should be legitimately withheld. Warton's opinion of these three writers may not be seriously disputed. More important, however, is the fact that they have been cited as examples; this shows that Warton's intention was to exclude from poetry that which had merely wit and sense to recommend it. But he certainly did not think that true poetry—that is, work in which the true poetical principle, imagination, is present—ceases to be so merely for having a little good sense in its composition.

If any doubts are felt about what sort of poets Warton referred to as men of wit and sense, we should turn to the last paragraph of the *Dedication*, where English poets are arranged in "four different classes." In the first class, he places only Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton; in the second class, such "as possessed the true poetical genius in a more moderate degree" together with "noble talents for moral, ethical, and panegyric poesy"—Dryden, for instance; in the third class, Donne, Swift, Butler, along with others; in the fourth, "the mere versifiers." Warton adds that his work is "intended to determine" Pope's place. 6 He defers this task till the end of the book,

1 I. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry*, 3rd impression (London, 1942), p. 9.

2 Ibid. pp. 7-8.

3 Even taking into account the recent work of Professors Duncan and Kathleen Tillotson.

4 The longest critical study till that time of any individual English poet.

5 *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, Vol. I, 1756, Vol. II, 1782 (5th edition, 1806) Vol. I, *Dedication*, pp. ii-iii.

6 Warton, *Dedication*, pp. vii-viii.

where Pope is declared to be "assuredly" not "in the same rank with *Spenser*, *Shakespeare*, and *Milton*, "but below them and "just above Dryden." 1 In Warton's opinion, then, Pope possessed the true poetical genius in a more than moderate degree; he is not with those who have only wit and sense, and are for this reason relegated to the *third* rank in the classification. It would be of interest to know what Warton considered to be Pope's "characteristical excellences, "since it is on them that his valuation of him as a poet was based. These are "*good sense* and *judgment*"; at the same time, the poet of *The Rape of the Lock* cannot "be thought to want imagination." But he "gave not so many proofs" of this as of his other virtues, and most of his works are "of the *didactic*, *moral*, and *satyric* kind; and consequently not of the most *poetic* species of *poetry*. 2 Warton recognised a poetry of the emotions and a poetry of reason, and he spoke of the latter without disparagement, because he knew that it is *not necessarily exclusive* of what he considered to be the first of poetic virtues—a creative imagination. Not all of this second kind of poetry is bad (like say Swift's, his example of a poetry of pure reason). In summing up it would be true to say that (1) Warton considered imagination as the first principle of poetry; that (2) he did not consider judgement and good sense as destructive of good poetry, though he insisted that they alone did not make a great poet.

Warton is never tired of saying, in the chapters on the separate poems, that Pope was a great poet—of a particular kind. The *Essay on Criticism* he describes as "a poem of that species, for which our author's genius

was particularly turned, the Didactic and the Moral; it is, therefore, as might be expected, a masterpiece in its kind." 3 He gives a passage of six lines from *Essay on Man* with the comment: "The poetry of these lines is as beautiful as the philosophy is solid." 4 He declares *The Rape of the Lock* as the best mock-heroic poem written, after he has discussed Allesandro Tassoni's *La Secchia, Rapita*, Boileau's *Lutrin* and Garth's *Dispensary*. The sylphs of Pope have not only novelty as 'machines,' but give opportunities for "exquisite poetry, and oblique satire." While Shakespeare "only could have thought" of the "gratifications" the fairies are to provide for Bottom, Pope, in a passage in which the care of Belinda's person is assigned to the several sylphs, adds "the most delicate satire to the most lively fancy". Yet another passage is "admirable" on account of its refined raillery, "poignancy and poetry." 5

It seems not to have been appreciated that Warton, though he had opportunities of knowing the poets of his time who are regarded as the precursors of romanticism, placed Pope above them. He expressly draws attention to the "preference" given by him to Pope "above other modern English poets," excluding from this comparison only Gray's *The Bard* and some passages in a few other poets—Thomson and Young, for instance. 6 In what he called the most poetical species of poetry he mentioned Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton as pre-eminent; and they, and *none but they*, are placed by him in the first rank of poets. The inferior poets in this kind are placed below Pope, who was pre-eminent in his own kind. Warton did not value equally the two kinds of poetry; but his preference for good poetry in one kind

1 Warton, II 404. Italics in the original. So also in the other quotations from Warton.

2 II, 402.

3 I, 97.

4 Warton, II, 95.

5 I, 214-225.

6 II, 405.

to indifferent poetry in the other, shows that what he cared for was good poetry, wherever it could be found—not just for poetry of a certain denomination.

A fact which has also to be kept in mind is that Warton's comparison of Pope with the three pre-eminent English poets is made in a short preface and in the briefest of conclusions to a voluminous work. While the revolutionary implications of these some ten pages of criticism should not be missed (they claimed recognition for a higher kind of poetry than that of Pope), they alone give a very imperfect idea of Warton's position. They would make one think that Warton is chiefly concerned with demoting Pope from the first rank of poets, while the fact that the main body of the work gives an appreciative account of the poet's works would be overlooked. Some of the romantic critics were driven by reaction to an extreme position, not Warton. For instance, it did not occur to him to ask if Pope was a poet. While one may differ from his opinion of this or that poem, his thesis impresses us by its moderation—a virtue conspicuously displayed in his acceptance of both romantic and Augustan poetry, of both Spenser and Pope. In this his temper and tastes are of his age—belong to what was *best* in it; not of the Augustan age, which had one set of prejudices; not of the Romantic period, which had another set of prejudices. When Dr. Johnson invited attention to Warton's essay as "a just specimen of literary moderation,"¹ he not only said the finest thing that had yet been said about it but indicated its place in the history of criticism.

Warton's insistence that Pope had the

true poetic imagination—though not in the same degree as Spenser and Milton, his predominant faculties being judgement and wit—is a point worth emphasizing. Mr. James Allison suggests in an interesting paper² that Warton may have owed something to Dr. Johnson, who says in the *Lives*: "Pope had, in proportions very nicely adjusted to each other, all the qualities that constitute genius,"³ (that is, along with other qualities, both imagination and judgement). Mr. Allison is not quite fair to Warton who in several passages in the first volume (1756) had referred to Pope's imagination, and referred not in terms of niggardly praise; though the second volume which reiterated the praise appeared in 1782—after the *Lives*. The truth seems to be that Warton's and Johnson's opinions on the character of Pope's poetry coincided. Pope was valued for his correctness by his own contemporaries, but both Warton and Dr. Johnson based his claims to the great title of poet on the fact that he *united* powers of imagination with those of judgement. Their admiration was not the wrong kind of admiration. If they did not undervalue correctness, neither did they overvalue it: they avoided extreme positions, would not condemn Pope for it, would not consider him a great poet solely because of it. Dr. Johnson said: "Of genius, that power which constitutes a poet; that quality without which judgment is cold, and knowledge is inert; that energy which collects, combines, amplifies and animates; the superiority must, with some hesitation, be allowed to Dryden. It is not to be inferred that of this poetical vigour Pope had only a little, because Dryden

1 "Review of An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope" in the *Literary Magazine*, 1736. *The Works of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Arthur Murphy, 12 vols., 1823; XI, 275).

2 "Joseph Warton's Reply to Dr. Johnson's *Lives*," *JEGP*, LI (April 1952).

3 Cited by Allison, p. 188.

had more ; for every other writer since Milton must give place to Pope." 1 To give one last example of the moderation with which the discussion of Pope was usually conducted in this period : Cowper recognized that a painstaking care for correctness did not preclude the possibility of good poetry. "Writers who find it necessary to make such strenuous and painful exertions, are generally as phlegmatic as they are correct ; but Pope was, in this respect, exempted from the common lot of authors of that class. With the unwearied application of a plodding Flemish painter, who draws a shrimp with

the most minute exactness, he had all the genius of the first masters." 2

James Beattie, in a book which was published between the first and second volumes of Warton's book, arrived at nearly the same opinion of Dryden as the latter had of Pope. This opinion was : Dryden was clearly deficient in poetic sublimity and pathos (for instance, *The State of Innocence* proves that he had "no adequate relish for the majesty of *Paradise Lost*"), but he was incontestably a great poet, by virtue of his peculiar gifts, and, in respect of them, worthy of comparison with Horace. 3

1 *The Lives of the English Poets*, ed. G. Birbeck Hill, 3 vols. Oxford, 1905 ; III, 228-229. Lowell thinks that Johnson referred to Warton in the following passage in the *Lives* : "After all this, it is surely superfluous to answer the question that has once been asked, whether Pope was a poet ?" If Johnson did so he here overstated Warton's point, which was that Pope was not the first of English poets ; most people had thought before Warton that he was. But Lowell must have ignored what Dr. Johnson immediately after added, with the magnanimity of a true lover of poetry : "To circumscribe poetry by definition will only show the narrowness of the definer." Lowell's own view, expressed in connection with this, is that of the romantic critic : "It is plain that in any strict definition there can be only one

kind of poetry." (Johnson, *Lives* III, 251. Lowell, "Pope," *The writings of James Russell Lowell*, 10 vols., London, 1890 ; IV, 84.)

In the passage in question, Johnson had probably in mind some unintelligent readers of Warton rather than Warton himself, whose "moderation" he had earlier commended in reviewing his work.

2 To the Rev. William Unwin, 5 January, 1782 *Letters of William Cowper* chosen and edited by— G. Frazer, 2 vols. (London, 1912) ; I, 169.

3 *Essays ; on Poetry and Music as They Affect the Mind ; on Laughter, and Ludicrous Composition ; on the Utility of Classical Learning* (Edinburgh, 1778), pp. 17-18.

Richardson and Fielding : Moral Sense and Moral Vision

DR. S. C. SEN

Richardson and Fielding were both deeply concerned with morals, and their work as novelists fully brings out this preoccupation. Their attitude to the question, however, shows considerable difference. Raleigh has drawn parallels to it from the differing views suggested by the terms Romantic and the Classical. The words are usually restricted to literature and the arts and are also extended to life but their association with a conception of morals is less common. The defect of the statement is that 'deeds done' no more supplies an adequate standard for Richardson than a study of motive does for Fielding. Fielding in *Tom Jones*, (the dedicatory epistle to George Lyttleton), declares that the reader of his novel "will find in the whole course of it nothing prejudicial to the cause of religion and virtue, nothing inconsistent with the strictest rules of decency, nor which can offend even the chastest eye in the perusal. On the contrary, I declare, that to recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavour in this history." The claim made by Fielding was not, however, thought just by some of the most outstanding men of the age. Johnson, according to a conversation reported by Boswell (1772), remarked that Fielding's pictures belonged to "very low life. Richardson used to say, that had he not known who Fielding was, he should have believed he was an ostler. Sir, there is more knowledge of the heart in one letter of Richardson's, than in all "Tom Jones". ("Life of Johnson", E. V. L., 1923, Vol. I, pp. 426-427). Of Richardson; the great

lexicographer spoke with more enthusiasm, but his praise was given mainly on the strength of the senior novelist's higher conception of morals, and not that of his art as a storyteller. The comment on Richardson follows immediately after the words quoted above: "Why, Sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself. But you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story as only giving occasion to the sentiment." Richardson's sentiment was a moral one. Of this he himself writes with some complacency in his reference to "Sir Charles Grandison", which he observes "is not published ultimately, nor even principally, any more than the other two, for the sake of entertainment only. A much nobler end is in view" (Works edited by Leslie Stephen, X. 10).

Richardson's attitude is strictly puritanic. Pamela's self-restraint in the face of seduction, Clarissa's martyrdom, are both the outcome of adherence to Christian principles, as interpreted by the Puritan. The portraits of characters by Richardson do not lack inwardness: they are careful psychological studies but his idea of human goodness is closely related to the Christian conscience, imposing a pattern of conduct upon those who wish to live a worthy life. His wicked characters, Mrs Jewkes, Mrs Sinclair, Lovelace and certain others, are illustrations of what happens when the voice of this conscience is stifled by lust, revenge, and the other deadly sins. His range of virtues and vices is limited. This is because he did not

study life, or very much of it, at first hand. In him we see an operation of the moral sense, a dwelling upon goodness and wickedness in some of their known and accepted forms. His variations on the theme are not many, but those he offers are striking. If the moral sense does not range far in search of new material on which to operate, within the limited field of its choice, it works with great insight, and even with intensity. Richardson with his moral sense is helpless when he has to pronounce upon attitudes and ways of life, which do not lend themselves to ready assessment with the help of certain conventional ideas. His failure to make Sir Charles Grandison live is because of the fact that his ideas were too narrow to embrace the whole of life. Sir Charles as lover, duellist, as brother, and son, as benefactor and pupil presented too many variations for the resources at the command of his author. Brought upon Christian doctrines, Grandison emulates too self-consciously the ideal of a gentleman and a Christian hero to be anything but a bore at the end. He is stiff-jointed and unconvincing as a character, because the moral sense which has depicted him is inelastic, artificial, and operates without reference to the actual and the changing scene around us.

It is Fielding's triumph that he kept himself in touch with the actual and the changing scene. No doubt the vigour and the vitality of his portraiture would shock the conventional. For the disciplined man with his emotions and feelings carefully under control, is the standard for such people. Whenever there is excess, even an excess of observation, the faculty would seem to belong to one outside the pale. It is, therefore, not surprising that Fielding should appear to be "an ostler." ✓

The gift which made Fielding a moralist is a gift, which may at first sight seem

almost immoral—his view of life was too large and too robust for the Puritan taste, and his variations on the theme of goodness and its opposite also indicate a mind which does not move within a groove but seems to grow in contact with subject. The apt description for the quality we find in him is moral vision.

Fielding writes about the whole of his contemporary society. The rich and the poor, the virtuous and the wicked are all included in his vision. His method of approach is characteristic: it is in accord with the moral vision he embodies in his story. ✓ For his purpose, he needed a certain amount of simplification. His characters thus undergo a simplification so that they frequently suggest types more than individuals—they change without developing, and are best classified as flat characters. In his world there is a sense of good and evil co-existing and being in frequent contact. The physical proximity is good for contrast. The vision which we discover in Fielding's work is an expression of wisdom. His men and women act as they do in life: only the typical acts are described. For only thus can they be known when the scope for saying anything is so rigidly limited by the conditions of a story. ✓ Fielding's wisdom comes from the searching analysis of character and situation. He studies motives, he is not misled by outward acts and behaviour to give praise and blame. His general conclusion is that men are most usually prompted by self-interest, that in most people a wide gulf is fixed between what they say and do, that we are most of us without even an elementary self-knowledge, that hypocrisy is one of the worst vices and that compared with it nearly all other weaknesses are almost pardonable, because they are overcome in the course of time.

These general ideas which underlie the

social picture are almost a meditation upon life. The society he refers to may belong to his time but it is not of it that he speaks exclusively. He has himself admitted that his concern is with human nature: "The provision, then, which we have here made is no other than *Human Nature*", he writes in the opening chapter of "Tom Jones". This is a proof of the fact that though he contemplated human nature under one of its temporary aspects—as it appeared to him in one of its manifestations in England in the eighteenth century—he did not bother himself with the non-essential details which encumbered the view, and tried to present the type, as pure as he could, because only then would his vision emerge as all-embracing and clear, as an impartial and unbiased study of human nature. Moral sense fails to address itself to so great a task as a study and assessment of human nature. Moral vision, however, is an apt and adequate instrument for the purpose. What Fielding tells us about rogues is not a sermon to avoid the pitfalls of life: the effect is an illumination which reveals the road and, therefore, also the dangers that encompass it. If the aim of the sermon and the illumination is the same, it may be said that the latter is far more helpful, and does more honour to human nature. If we can see the moral vision in Fielding, we shall also see why he appears more effective as a writer and thinker.

From the point of view of moral vision we notice a common ground in the work of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Fielding.

"On First Looking into Chapman's 'Homer'".

Dr. S. C. SEN

Keats in his sonnet describes the effect of reading great poetry (in the present context it is the Homeric epic) under the metaphor of travelling through goodly states and kingdoms—in other words, through the ideal realm of imagination, 'the realms of gold', and his first sensation, although not specified, clearly accords with the situation, it is physical, a kind of goose flesh of awe and admiration. His sensation is still physical as he commands the view of 'one wide expanse', which is the Homeric epic in Chapman's translation. Its prevailing quality is clear, calm, placid, 'pure serene' is the expression used, and he breathes it for the first time in Chapman's translation, characterized as 'loud and bold'—these words seem to contradict the earlier impression, and the exact meaning intended must, therefore, be carefully enquired into. The balance, proportion, the controlled and ordered form, are among the dominant virtues implied, which unite with an almost primitive vigour of invention. Formal clarity is wedded to tremendous forces of passion and imagination.

In reading Homer or great poetry in general, the physical sensation is obviously the first and the immediate effect. It is then followed by others which introduce a conception of the infinite, in the presence of which speech is either useless or impossible. He compares the reaction upon him with that on an astronomer whose scanning eyes suddenly discover a new planet—for Keats a

star, and even a planet, seem to act as a symbol for the infinite. In his sonnet 'Bright star would I were steadfast as thou' the symbolic sense is apparent. Here the star is invoked as the nightingale is invoked elsewhere to cure him of the vacillating state or the fret or the fever of life to which he seems condemned. He conceives of the nightingale as immortal, and he does so because of the beauty of its song, and beauty for the poet is imperishable. By the logic of his artistic creed, he thinks of the bird, singing in like fashion through thousands of years, to have achieved a deathless state, thus providing him with a symbol, which elevates his mind from the temporal to the timeless in a flight of imagination. Such a symbol he finds in art also—'Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought As doth eternity'.

The solitary reader is overwhelmed by speechless wonder. He feels the same as an astronomer discovering a new planet. While we are with others sharing the sensation like 'stout Cortez's' men, watching the new world from a peak in Darien, the feeling is still inexpressible. In fact, whether we contemplate the eternity of time or the eternity of art, we are equally 'teased out of thought', of the power to say anything to give a sense of the experienced reality.

The ascent in meaning is remarkable in the poem, and the symbols used adequately convey this. The goodly states and kingdoms, the basis of a purely physical sensation, lead on to the planet, to the height of the

sky, whose discovery gives more than a bodily thrill, it gives the contemplative a joy that can find no voice in language. At the beginning the journey is through level plain, at the end we stand on a peak in Darien, not looking at the sky but at what seems a new world, although a part of that we inhabit. The first stanza dwells on movement through earthly landscape, later there is an ascent to the altitude of the planet through the eye, and finally the body is lifted to the height of a mountain while the eye explores the region below.

The ascent indicates a progress in thought and involves a speculation on what poetry

means to the reader. It gives us the best the earth contains and raises the thought to a great height, the planet and the peak are both symbols for the eternity of art.

The word 'swimming' ('in swimming into the ken') introduces an element of subtlety in the structure, to which my attention has been drawn by a colleague in the English Department of the University. I do not know if the point has been noticed before but there is no doubt that it contributes to the enrichment of implication by its anticipation of the next image relating to the Pacific Ocean.

"The Good Morrow" (Donne)

Dr. S. C. SEN

The expression in Shelley ('One word is too often profan'd') seems primarily to spring from a sense of music in words, from an association of words and ideas without immediate or intimate reference to feeling. The words cast the spell, and at the end after unlocking the word hoard as it were, he is able to endow them with what seems a personal feeling—a cry of the heart. Although the first lyric impulse in man may have come from a cry, we cannot now go back to our origins and discover and renew the enchantment our remote ancestors have known.

With Shelley's art we may compare that of Donne in a simple and well-known poem like 'The Good Morrow'. Shelley was lost among words. They were his toys and he was the child playing with them. His processes of construction were perhaps unreflecting but the results were frequently sweet—as a child's handiwork often is. Donne is, however, the mature man. His "Good Morrow" suggests that love is the only awaking principle of life—the feeding baby at the mother's breast is immaturity, is passivity, it is life at its weakest, incapable of anything but dependence, a derivative existence. Love's impact is awakening. In the world of Nature the truth of this is obvious. The lovers suggest cosmic metaphors because the power that moves them according to Platonic philosophy, is the basic element, maintaining the harmony of the universe.

Donne's poem flows from a full heart, and

he tries to find verbal equivalents for his emotion, which produces a fulness of life in him. He culls from the vegetable world—the world of silent growth—a metaphor, reminiscent of his unregenerate life, which ran its course without knowledge of love's transforming power. This transforming power lies in making "one little room, an every where" and the lovers spheres or worlds. The suggestion is not of elevation in a spiritual sense but a kind of overwhelming increase in stature. Love magnifies even in a physical sense. It rules the heart and extends its dominion over the world of things as well. By the use of cosmic metaphors the poet is thinking of the vast significance of each to the other. The littleness of earlier life appeared in mutual distrust—"watch not one another out of fear", and the greatness of his present life in "Love so alike, that none doe slacken, none can die". The lovers have no fear, no doubt, they give as much as they get and they give their complete selves to each other. In this surrender is to be seen the magnificent extension of one's being and the abiding reality of that which has caused the fusion of selves.

Donne's words do not work within the limits of a single tune, as Shelley's seem to do. Shelley chooses his words by the standard of likeness—by their conformity to the same magic of suggestion like a child picking up pebbles of the same colour for its constructions. Donne reaches out to a variety of thought and states the desires of the adult heart, disregarding the usual manner because

what he feels is unique and nothing will serve except a unique form of expression.

The references to the cold north wind and the setting sun suggest a contrast between the imperfections of the natural world and the perfections of the world love creates. The comparison between an individual and the world is known in literature. The difference in Donne's treatment is that he insists on an identification on sensuous evidence. The hemisphere is half a world, the lovers are each a half world. Between them they compose one whole. Each again is one world and possesses one world, his or her beloved.

The statement sounds fantastically exaggerated but what can give a sense of the fulness of the lover's possession except the idea that he possesses not this or that valuable object, a diamond or a chrysolite, but the whole world—everything.

To love, to awaken to life, to possess, to form an exclusive world by the power of love—these are no vague desires. They give us passion, and to make the passion appear in all its glory and strength, the words are so chosen as not to suggest a known feeling but a unique experience.

Donne's poem has a central feeling. It finds modes of expression which first of all

establish love's all-comprehensive significance on the physical plane, it is waking from sleep, it is being alive, and not vegetating like a plant. Love as an inward experience is waking to beauty; its outward effect is to give a sense of possession as wide as the heart can desire. The poem is built up by words and metaphors corresponding to a feeling in which the poet recognizes a unique experience conferring on life its supreme value. The Shelley poem, on the other hand, seems rooted in what is mainly outward, in words and ideas which grow into a pattern by their own energy of association. For Shelley a poem arises from a tune. It stirs his imagination into activity, and the words he uses come to him because they prolong the original harmony. Not subtle like Donne, he has less profundity than the former because in a way he is more spontaneous, more like a child, delighted and pleased with the obvious but without knowledge of the depths from which arise our greatest sustaining power and our richest thoughts and feelings. Donne has access to these depths, and the crudenesses of his expression are like the effort of a pioneer laying a new road across unexplored territory.

Book-Review

Literary History of the United States edited by Robert E. Spiller and six other scholars. The Macmillan Company. New York. pp 1478. Second Printing, 1953.

More than fifty contributors are responsible for this monumental work. The unity of its character is achieved by a sense shared by all the writers of America's rise to hegemony among the nations by her valuable work in arts, letters, the sciences and in industry. But the consciousness of America's role in the present world does not produce a bumptious attitude, which in a situation like this is all too common, but a sense of responsibility—a feeling that everything should be done to attain to a high standard of excellence, to collect facts from an immense variety of sources and marshal them with scientific precision, and a literary art, which without being obtrusive, is never for a moment neglected. The result is a work, well-informed, sober, truthful, and showing the utmost literary tact, to be pored over and enjoyed. America seems to have specialized in the production of books, which are both learned and readable—the drab facts come alive under the hand, and the simple and the learned equally profit by the American writers' shrewd yet sensitive approach to the problems they undertake to investigate.

To read this work with full appreciation one has to know something about American literature. The average student of literature will have some acquaintance with half a dozen writers of the last century—Emerson, Hawthorne, Poe, Holmes, Whitman and Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens), and the popularity of Emerson's essays, Poe's

mystery tales, *Leaves of Grass*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables* and Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*, *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, seems to continue almost undiminished. Although the list provides some of the best titles in American literary history, they cannot be equated with the expression of American literary genius, and a more extensive reading is necessary to have access to it in an adequate measure. For this purpose invaluable help is rendered in the form of a four-volume anthology, also edited by Mr. R. E. Spiller, and published by the Macmillan Company.

American literature, it is emphasized in 'Address to the Reader' with which the work under review opens, is a *transported* European culture but it is also a *transformed* culture. Although study and imitation have built up the literature, its transforming agent was the childhood inheritance of an environment, which belongs to the New world. The summary of what happened in more recent years to produce an original and independent attitude may be given in the words of the editorial note, mentioned above:

"By the twentieth century and specially after the First World War, the United States was no longer a New World. Culture was now not immigrant here except on a basis of equal exchange, and the complex interactions of democracy and industrialism and the new struggle for economic democracy outweighed in importance any pressure from abroad. By the mid-century American fiction and American drama of the screen were beginning to dominate the imagination of the masses throughout the world, although

of this striking fact the American intellectual was as yet scarcely aware". (p XX).

Two facts seem to possess special importance in the statement just quoted: the American influence upon the masses throughout the world and the trend of American culture to provide for the common man—its basically democratic character.

The early settlers in America faced a situation, found also in contemporary Tudor England, in which three opposed forms of life battled for supremacy—the Medieval, the Renaissance and the Reformation. The contribution of the first to American outlook was that the primary values of life are theological; of the second, a scientific curiosity along with a new type of individualism. Far more is claimed as the gift of Reformation, and the lengthy history before us tends to show that the spirit of American letters is predominantly Protestant. The Protestant world was mercantile and middle-class, its women were almost entirely devoted to the domestic sphere. A remark made in this connexion will wind up the discussion of origins: 'the curious and singular purity of the history of womanhood in the United States is no less a product of the Protestant Reformation than is Woolman's *Journal* or Emerson's Divinity School Address, (p. 15).

American history is always very much in evidence as a formative force behind American letters, and Jefferson's doctrine of universal educational opportunity is justly dwelt upon for its significance in the evolution of American culture. All that is of value in this monumental study cannot be noticed in a short review like this. We must content ourselves with the description of some of the features which seem to have qualities worth commenting upon.

In all this long account we come across the first brilliant man and interesting per-

sonality in Benjamin Franklin, the record of whose life and activity comes at the end of the first hundred pages of preliminary survey. One main business of his life was to draw like-minded people together to bring about a just political order out of the confusions of prejudice and special interests—a task which each generation has to do anew to avoid stagnation and decay. Franklin the scientist is probably better known than the literary man whose terse observations on life have sometimes the wisdom and penetration of La Rochefoucauld himself, as the following example will show 'The brave and the wise can both pity and excuse when cowards and fools have no mercy'. (p. 106).

Of Charles Brockden Brown few of us know anything yet Shelley Keats, and Hazlitt admired him as the master of American "Gothic", of which his *Wieland* is perhaps the most successful embodiment. American drama pioneered by Thomas Gödfrey's *The Prince of Parthia* has reached great excellence in our time. In the chapter entitled 'The American Dream' Edgar Quinet is quoted as saying in 1831:

'A new idea of God will surge from the lakes of Florida and the peaks of the Andes: in America will begin a new religious era and will be born a new idea of God'. (p. 214). This dream, more than a century old now, has not come true. America's great experiment has been in the field of material progress. Like the rest of the world its spiritual life has been without enthusiasm or new discoveries.

The great names in the field of letters are those of Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, Thoreau, Melville, Emily Dickinson and others. In addition to the outstanding half a dozen mentioned earlier, these writers give us on the whole a connected view of American literary developments. Chapters on folklore, humour, and the

Indian heritage stress the proces of fusion and expansion, important in the history of American life.

The last of the 10 important sections into which the work is divided deals with 'World Literature'. It notices the years between the two wars and is packed with information and comments, which provide useful guidance for the study of the period. T. S. Eliot gets a fairly long notice, commensurate with his eminence as poet and critic, and his words characterizing authentic poetry have been placed in the forefront as heralding a new and difficult standard for the 1920's, when his voice was first heard and interpreted: "a peculiar honesty, which, in a world too frightened to be honest is peculiarly terrifying". T. S. Eliot's aims and purposes are best set forth in his own words. They have a certain depth of meaning and subtlety of suggestion, which we inadvertently lose in summarizing them. Hence the writer of this section does well to quote another well-known remark on the same subject: "Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results". A comment made with reference to Eliot's attitude to diction is apt and valuable as summary: Eliot "had thought as persistently about the question of language, and held that it was the poet's responsibility to be as aware as possible of the historical weight of connotation behind the words he was using, and to master a diction that could range from the most erudite to the most colloquial, as the mind of the educated man must range". (p. 1342). As regard the nature of T. S. Eliot's work, the writer of this section quotes the poet's own words, used in a different context, to describe it. He had found "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance

to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy that is contemporary history". (p. 1343).

We must conclude our review at this point. The work is stimulating as reading; for it gives us an extending vision and not unrelated fragments. As we read we see the developments, we see a complete picture being built up. That so many hands engaged in the production of a single work should be able to produce this effect of unity is a perfect example of scholarly cooperation, not easy to match.

The work is prescribed as a text-book for examinations for a certificate in American Civilization conducted by the University of Pennsylvania, held for the first time in Calcutta in November 1960.

S. C. Sen

Capell and Malone and Modern Critical Bibliography by Sailendra Kumar Sen, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya. 6/1A, B. Akrur Lane, Calcutta-12. Price Rs. 3/. pp. 52.

Professor Sen's brochure is a study of a much-explored subject in which chances of arriving at a new conclusion are meagre, but the attempt he has made indicates an interest in material, almost inaccessible to scholars in this country and is, therefore, valuable as opening up a field of enquiry, practically sealed off for us. Professor Sen's statement is clear, accurate, and scholarly, and he vindicates Capell and Malone from comparative neglect. He has fairly established a case for these two early textual critics as following the modes of criticism, to which Dr. Johnson was the first to draw pointed attention. Earlier critics in the field treated the printed texts of Shakespeare as classical scholars treated the manuscripts of the classics, as if each contained valid text without a difference in the degrees of authenticity. For

printed texts, the first to appear provides the basis for subsequent editions—this is the critical attitude developed by Dr. Johnson but its adumbrations are found in Capell and Malone, and therefore, all honour is due to them. Professor Sen has shown this with the help of certain quotations from these critics, and has thus rendered useful assistance towards a final assessment of their contributions. Professor Sen's own words will best describe his point of view: "Capell and Malone grasped the history and interrelations of the old printed editions and arrived at the idea of the authoritative text; and Capell and Malone clearly perceived that the most authoritative text has first to be decided upon separately for each play and then adhered to." When we appreciate this view, we shall understand why he takes exception to Greg's statement regarding modern "reaction against the eclectic methods of the great Shakespearean editors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries".

S. C. Sen

Literary Criticism : A Short History.

William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Cleanth Brooks. First Edition 1957. Pages xviii+755+xxii. Price 55/- Net. Published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York; Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London.

The book is a major contribution of Yale University to scholarship in recent times. A Borzoi Book, it is a worthy counterpart to Saintsbury's "A History of Criticism and Literary Taste."

A "short" history but it runs to eight hundred pages. It is brilliant in execution. But considering the vastness of its scope and the width of speculative range, a single volume in four parts is not certainly 'big' enough.

It is a joint undertaking by two established critics of America to trace the æsthetic heritage

of the West and to make a laborious survey of the long and tortuous evolution of critical ideas through nearly two thousand years and a half, right from their origins in classical antiquity down to their present day developments in the English-speaking world. The result of their collaboration is a grand, astonishingly comprehensive guide-book into critical theory from Plato and Aristotle to Eliot and Empson; the survey includes the classical antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and Neo-classic eras, the Romantic and Post-Romantic revolutions, and finally a view of the confusion in this mid-twentieth century.

The vision and the argument of the authors are adjusted to a proper perspective, dealing with historical and artistic issues, and maintaining the balance of speculative and practical considerations. Each critical theory is viewed not simply in relation to those of the preceding and succeeding ages in England and on the Continent but also in relation to the creative literature of its own time. And the theories of the past are not only analysed for their intrinsic value but also closely examined for what they are worth in so far as they have a bearing on the critical activities of our present time.

The authors' belief in the continuity and intelligibility of the history of literary argument sustains them throughout their journey and exploration. "Plato has", they contend, "a bearing on Croce and Freud, and *vice-versa*. Or, all three of these theorists are engaged with a common reality and hence engage one another through the medium of that reality and either come to terms or disagree."

But despite their confidence in the continuity and real community of human experience through the ages, the writers are fully alert in marking with sufficient accuracy and clarity the differences in the viewpoints and critical attitudes of successive periods and schools. They show a high

degree of sensitiveness to subtle changes in the nature of aesthetic experience and shiftings of stress on critical values, to "levels, depressions, and eminences" in the creative stream. The differences between Elizabethan England and Augustan Rome, between Chaucer and Pope, between Poe and Blackmore, or between Dryden and Rymer are equally patent from their observation.

What they have all through searched for and found at last is the essential oneness in the apparent diversity of critical attitudes to literary forms. Though productions have varied in structure and appeal, the creative urge in every case is ultimately reducible to a common denomination. "The several literary genre conceptions dominant in several ages—dramatic, epistolary, heroic, burlesque, and lyric—will if studied carefully open up not so many diverse views into multiplicity and chaos but so many complementary insights into the one deeply rooted and perennial human truth which is the poetic principle".

The authors' approach to the History of Literary Argument is essentially philosophical. The successive chapters of the volume reveal full awareness on their part of the various philosophic problems which literary criticism by its nature has ever posed. They have made a thorough study of "the critical problem of values and emotions, subject and object, relative and universal, the role of words, accent on experience, light refracted through a crystal, reality of external values, the naive". And they have succeeded remarkably in effecting a final reconciliation of a bewildering multiplicity of perspectives and a variety of focuses: Socratic Rhapsodic, Aristotelian Mimetic, Ricardian Affective, Crocean Expressionistic, and Empsonian Linguistic: values sensory, aesthetic and spiritual: approaches pragmatic and meta-physical—all views up and down, all roads

leading to the capital realization that "a theory of poetic or fine art must keep asserting in various idioms, by various stratagems, in accord with the demands of the dialectic of the time, the special character of poetry as a tensional union of making with seeing and saying".

Part One of the volume traces the origins of literary criticism in the Greco-Roman world and its development in the Mediaeval Age. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were the pioneers, and they put stress on Rhapsody, Inspiration, and structure respectively. Horace, Juvenal, Longinus, and Plotinus were later stalwarts developing the Hellenistic argument with emphasis severally on conscious art, balanced urbanity, mystic sublimity and aesthetic symmetry.

In Part Two, Criticism emerges out of Mediaeval Neo-Platonic themes, and, passing through the humanism of the Renaissance and the Rhetoric of later wits, attains a Neo-classic universal in the eighteenth century. Sidney and Jonson, Dryden and Pope, Addison and Johnson were the landmarks. Going at first by the rule and model of Greece, Italy, and France, they evolved gradually an independent critical attitude characterized by rationality and love of the norm.

Part Three, ploughing through the Nineteenth century, notes a double swing in literary argument between two extreme poles. Out of the theories of Genius, Emotion, and Association of the later Eighteenth Century Criticism was reborn in the Romantic themes of Natural Diction, Transcendent Imagination, and Rhapsodic Didacticism. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley are representative interpreters and enthusiasts. The Arnoldian Prophecy in the mid-century was a cry in the wilderness, lost, on the one hand, to the new Historical Method with its stress on the Real and the Social, and,

on the other, to the new aestheticism of Art for Art's Sake and the Crocean Expressionism.

In Part Four the authors, cautiously treading on fresh fields, are confronted with a multiplicity of attitudes and angles of vision for the interpreter and assessor of art:

Symbolism of Symons and Yeats, yielding to Richards's new Poetics of Tension, the Impersonal Art of Eliot and Pound, the Myth and Archetype of Auden and Chase, and lastly, the emphasis on the Semantic Principle of Ogden and Empson.

K. C. Lahiry

Notes And Comments

In 'The Sewanee Review' for Spring, 1960 is published an article by Professor William Empson, which he calls "A Defense of Delilah". This, we are told, will form part of a book he is working on, to be named "Milton's God". The writer is a distinguished poet and critic of English letters, and nothing from his pen can be entirely devoid of interest. But his present manner is somewhat unlike the manner, which we have learned to associate with his work as critic: here he takes obviously a special plea and searches for Delilah's defence in the repertory of modern jurisprudence. The following comment, which he offers in the first paragraph of his article, well shows the point of view: Milton, Professor Empson states, "needed a real Delilah for his play, and the lady he produced would be given heavy damages, by any British or American jury, as a deeply wronged wife". Delilah does not belong to our time, and it will not do to unsettle chronology in order to enter a plea on her behalf. If she is proved a bad wife or a treacherous mistress, we must try to understand how these offences were

understood in her time and by her own people. We cannot transpose men and things in the dimensions of time and space to revise our attitude towards them. Quoting the following speech by Samson, the writer offers a comment worth scrutinizing:

"Among the daughters of the Philistines

I chose a wife, which argued me no foe", etc.

The critic introduces the passage with the remark based upon the information that inter-marriage between the Jews and the Philistines was permitted: "Samson answers with what we already know to be a lie" and proceeds to refer to authority to support his case; "The Bible does say (Judges XIV) that they threatened the bride they would 'burn thee and thy father's house with fire', but we gather that they were only trying to avoid paying on the bet". What we can scarcely forget is that the Samson of Milton is not the Samson of the Bible: it is a Miltonic recreation, and hence it is not pertinent to our consideration to discover discrepancies between the source and its use by the poet from the moral point of view. The meeting with Delilah, the introduction

The Miltonic account of the meeting between Samson and Delilah opens with words, which seem to rule out as improbable any idea of insincerity on the part of the woman, whose acts certainly expose her to the charge of treachery; the words are spoken by the Chorus, and they are little likely to aim at an impression, which will be favourable to her without justification :

And words addrest seem into tears dissolv'd,
Wetting the borders of her silk'n veil".

“... ..weakness is thy excuse,
And I believe it, weakness to resist
Philistian gold.....

To satisfy thy lust".

... ..I know thy trains
Though dearly to my cost, thy ginns, and toyls;
Thy fair enchanted cup, and warbling charms
No more on me have power.....

Deceivable, in most things as a child"... and thereby

Professor Empson's parallels to the Nihilist, the partition of India, and other matters of comparatively recent date, used to illustrate the case between Samson and Delilah, are

a popular method of attacking a problem, which seems somewhat out of keeping with a serious enquiry, such as we expect in a learned discussion. We may quote him again from the first paragraph of his article for emphasizing the fact that Milton was trying to present a case impartially rather than giving his sympathy to any one: "It has been thought that he (Milton) was 'unconsciously' in favour of Satan; but you would probably need to get a fair way down in his Unconsciousness before you got underneath his dislike for Delilah".

It seems that the word 'dislike' does not quite apply to Milton's portrait of Delilah. He presented a situation, which was irreconcilable. The attitude of Samson as well as that of the Chorus, stressed 'the deed done'. Hence the words 'manifest snake' are used against her and the reference to treachery. Delilah admitted that she had merited her husband's displeasure because 'the fact more evil drew in the perverse event than I foresaw'. Here we see the justice of the portraiture, which makes any attempt at discovering Milton's sympathies both irrelevant and pointless.

* * * *

"The Times Literary Supplement" for September 9, 1960 is devoted to a discussion of what it calls 'the British Imagination'; there should be a question mark put against the subject proposed. In the first instance, human imagination can hardly be segregated into compartments. One should think that in this realm there is free movement without the restriction of national, even geographical, boundaries. In the second, the Celtic, Scot, and the Anglo-Saxon races, even at this distant date, retain certain qualities which indicate a separate way of life and thinking, which still refuse to form a whole in which individual differences are lost. The articles contributed contain only an occasional

retrospect: they seem almost wholly taken up with the contemporary scene. The imagination stressed in them is equated with mental attitudes, traits of character, and preferences for subjects, habit of reticence, and consequent omissions in the records the writers leave behind, specially in the field of autobiography. The pride of place is given to an article on autobiography, containing a remark, which may not pass entirely unchallenged: "Autobiography belongs to that category of statement at which we naturally excel: like the sermon—another national art—form—it allows of no riposte". The sentence is followed by a statement about a deficiency, which belongs to the British character: "What we are bad at is the rapid give-and-take of ideas which alone can frighten us into silence." The next article deals with the subject of religion and is called "The Reticent Faith"—its link with the previous being the uncommunicative element in the British character, its reticence. A remark is made in it which describes a situation without sufficiently probing into it: "In fact, and to generalize, there is very little to be learnt about religious emotion in the English novel, except from the women writers". The third article, "The Workaday World that the Novelist Never Enters" tells us that English novelists from the last century until now "have been conspicuously reticent in showing their characters at work". The explanation seems to be a lack of knowledge, particularly of manual labour: "The truth is that most English novelists are educated in a way that precludes any wide range of practical experience". Another statement, which follows is a little unexpected but not altogether unfamiliar to readers of the English novel: "The idea of class distinction remains the most important single factor in the modern English novel". The account concludes with the remark: 'Not less

art, but more life, is what the novel chiefly needs today'. "The Uses of Comic Vision", also discusses contemporary fiction, and among its observations, the most important one seems to be: "It is this vehicle of humour ('including satire and irony within the category') that many of our novelists have chosen through the past half-century to express their social feelings, or their attitude towards a moral situation". The writer winds up the discussion by the comment that the extraordinary variety of English social comedy "gives one confidence in the future use of comedy as a principal medium for expressing the British moral and social imagination". "Evaluation in Practice" is a survey of the critical trends: it states: "There is no break, criticism still takes its lead from Dr. Richards's work forty, or Dr. Leavis's thirty, years ago".

These views and opinions, quoted above, will clarify the approach made to the subject, announced for discussion by a large number of writers. Although much that is valuable is said in the articles, they can also be described as "an essay in omissions". The British Isles in the modern world had developed the idea of democracy, and its most convincing working is still to be found here. In literature, this idea has often been embodied. Masfield's "Cargoes" finds a characteristic image for it:

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked
smoke stack
Butting through the channel in the mad
March days,
With a cargo of Tyne coal,
Road-rails, pig-lead,
Firewood, iron ware, and cheap tin trays.

Again, the creator of *Clarissa Harlowe*, Samuel Richardson, should not be left out of a list containing the names of novelists

who showed a preoccupation with religion. In the Twentieth Century T. F. Powys's "Mr. Weston's Good Wine" presents a view of religion, which certainly deserved notice. While the proportions of the subject are as great as they are in the present case, no adequate account of it is possible in the single number of a journal. In summarizing the points discussed in a few articles, our purpose is mainly to draw the attention of our readers to them and induce them to give some thought to the problems raised.

* * * *

Darwin's "On the Origin of Species" was published in 1859, and Browning's "Dramatis Personae" in 1864. In the latter is included "Rabbi Ben Ezra", which seems to contain an indirect answer to Darwin's exclusive reliance on material data for his conclusions. Browning does not question that man arose from beast, an argument rendered explicit in *The Descent of Man* (1871), but he does not think that man's destiny is implied by his origin. Man is not satisfied like a 'maw-crammed' beast. The physical, uninspiring element which belongs to beast is no more man's nature—he has learned to aspire, material things do not seem enough for him.

Irks care the the crop-full bird ?

Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast ?

Rejoice we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive !
A spark disturbs our clod ;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take,
I must believe

The attitude in "Rabbi" is an important indication of Browning's awareness of and interest in contemporary questions, and the

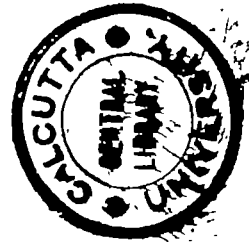
point is valuable because it serves to indicate that the general belief of Browning's aloofness, except on questions of theology from his age, is untenable.

Writing to Dr. F. J. Furnivall from Venezia on October 11, 1881, Browning makes a number of observations, which tend to show that the main view of evolution was intuitively understood by him even before it was scientifically presented by Darwin: "In reality, all that seems *proved* in Darwin's scheme was a conception familiar to me from the beginning. See in *Paracelsus* the progressive development from senseless matter to organized, until man's appearance (*Part v.*) Also in *Cleon*, see the order of "life's mechanic",—and I daresay in many passages of my poetry: for how can one look at Nature as a whole and doubt that,

wherever there is a gap, a "link" must be "missing"—through the limited power and opportunity of the looker?...But I do not consider that his case as to the changes in organization, brought about by desire and will in the creature, is proved. Tortoises never saw their own shells, top or bottom, nor those of their females, and are diversely variegated all over, each species after its own pattern. And the insects; this one is coloured to escape notice, this other to attract it, a third to frighten the foe—all out of one brood of caterpillars hatched in one day. No—I am incredulous". "Letters of Robert Browning Collected by Thomas J. Wise, New Haven: Yale University Press 1933 pp. 199-200). Browning puts his case well but he lacked scientific training and his criticism is not, therefore, of interest except as an indication of his own attitude.

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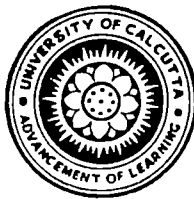
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Dr. S. C. SEN

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OTHELLO'S OCCUPATION

A. G. STOCK

Rajasthan University

(1)

Though *Othello* is a play about jealousy, it is not the tragedy of an excessively jealous nature. It is hard to imagine such a nature in a tragic hero, for excessive jealousy is mean, and a tragic hero, whatever his social ethics, must be magnanimous enough to compel admiration.

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Master Ford is a straightforward study of jealousy—not analysed but shown in action as Ben Jonson shows his characters' humours: his painstaking efforts to catch his perfectly respectable wife in an act of infidelity contribute to a roaring comedy. But Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing* is a more analytic study, and suggests the sketch of a psychology of jealousy.

Claudio is a calculating character, who comes home from the wars covered with glory, and after making sure that Hero will inherit her father's property, tries to cash in on the glory by marrying her. Doubtful of his own attractiveness, he asks his friend Don Pedro to do the preliminary wooing for him; then, when all seems to be going well, he jumps quite irrationally to the conclusion that his friend is stealing his intended bride's affections. The episode is not strictly necessary to the plot, but it shows the audience what to expect of Claudio and gives Don John light enough on his reactions to make mischief. When he fakes evidence that Hero is unchaste, Claudio jumps no less eagerly at that. If the evidence convinced him, it is hard to see why a gentlemanly suitor should not have gone to her father and broken off the match as quietly as circumstances allowed. Not so Claudio: he holds his tongue till they are actually before the altar, and then with the utmost possible publicity heaps abuses on her till she swoons from shock, and marches triumphantly away. Twice over, he has behaved as if he got some positive satisfaction from being betrayed. He seems to want to see himself as a wronged and righteous man.

An Adlerian psychologist might diagnose Claudio's complaint as an inferiority complex. For some reason—perhaps, for instance, he had suffered in youth from a domineering mother or a bullying elder sister—he was secretly afraid that he could never make a woman respect him. He was terrified that marriage would expose this, still more terrified of being known to be afraid of it. So he defended himself by attack, taking care to put the woman in the wrong before she had the chance to make him look ridiculous. Some of Adler's case-histories behave rather like that.

I do not suggest that Shakespeare had worked out Adler's theory before Adler; his studies of human behaviour are more varied than any school of psychologists is likely to explain. But by bringing out the streak of self-interest mixed with self-distrust in Claudio, and his readiness to see himself as the victim of treachery, he leads up plausibly to the scene in church. He seems to be tracing the source of Claudio's jealousy to the working of self-distrust in a mean nature. Because of this mean streak Claudio comes nowhere near being a tragic hero, although the plot has to take an improbable turn to prevent him from wrecking its happy ending. Neither is he adequate to be the pivot of a comedy, and Beatrice and Benedick take the lead out of his hands.

There are some likenesses between Othello's situation and Claudio's. Both are more at home on battlefields than in the company of civilised women. Both are aware of this inexperience, and both are deluded by a trick into thinking a true woman false. The likeness ends there: the keynote of Othello's nature is not meanness but magnanimity, and as a whole he is anything but distrustful of himself.

It is true that the plot turns on jealousy; the word is brought in again and again, and the question whether Othello has a jealous nature is canvassed more than once, so that the audience is forced to consider it. He himself, when Iago warns him about the green-eyed monster, retorts heatedly that he is incapable of living in suspicion, and events show how terribly right he is. Just before the storm over the handkerchief Desdemona—unasked, as if she had noted the quality in him and loved him for it—says that he is not a jealous man. When Emilia sounds rather sceptical she asserts

I think the sun where he was born
Drew all such humours from him.

Yet, after the storm, she finds it hard to answer Emilia's "Is not this man jealous?" In Emilia's experience, based on life with Iago, men are invariably jealous, and by way of consoling her mistress she points out that this kind of thing is only to be expected of a man:

They are all but stomachs, and we all but food;
They eat us hungerly, and when they are full,
They belch us.

Emilia, of course, has her own reasons for distracting Desdemona's mind from the handkerchief to male nature in general, and the audience is not expected to see Othello in her terms. All the same, besides speaking in character she has brought out a point relevant to the play. Like other evil tendencies jealousy is indigenous in human nature, always there to be played upon, and the question is not whether Othello is totally immune but whether he has a predisposition to give way to it.

A student reading the text may well think he has, since he is taken in so easily by Iago's conversation with Cassio (Act IV, i). I doubt if an Elizabethan theatre would give the same impression. The scene is difficult to make plausible on a typical modern stage, but the long projecting Elizabethan tongue would enable Othello to stand concealed in the rear, where he might be supposed to see the speakers' facial expressions and gestures without catching their words. He believes that they are talking of his wife, so that Cassio's laughter and gesticulations are only too expressive. And at the crucial moment, Bianca the prostitute sweeps down in an accusing passion and flings in Cassio's face the very handkerchief that is supposed to be half the evidence. It is one of several moments when chance plays malignantly on Iago's side, putting a more artistic finish on his plans than he could have contrived for himself. A man whose faith in his wife is already shaken need not be abnormally suspicious to be convinced by this that Cassio is her accepted lover.

Othello knew his ignorance of women, and his faith in Desdemona rested wholly on an intuition that her beauty was truth made visible. No doubt he ought to have trusted his intuition, which must have carried him to victory on many battlefields. But this was an unknown field, and commonsense as well as Iago told him that beauty might be deceptive. On the face of things, it seems to me that his trust in Iago is slightly more improbable. Could Othello have been the great general he was without some gift of judging men? How then could he have kept Iago by his side as comrade-in-arms through the rigours of several campaigns without seeing through him? But it is no use speculating on what happened before the play began. Some relationships have to be presupposed, and an audience, unlike the reader who turns back pages and asks questions, will accept them as they stand in the first Act.

(2)

There are hidden reasons, more complex than obsessive jealousy, for the ease with which Iago undermines his faith in Desdemona. Without Hamlet's or Macbeth's talent for self-analysis, Othello is as complex as either of them. He is a warrior before anything; a man of action, intensely self-reliant and somewhat isolated by his African darkness and his unknown background. In his own eyes it is clear that this background sets him above rather than below his associates. He has never condescended to boast of his ancestry, neither has he ever thought it an honour to be Brabantio's son-in-law. Nor is he eager for a settled life. Camps are his natural habitation and he lives for the glory of war; not for such an ambition of world conquest as Antony threw away for Cleopatra, but an ideal of soldierly greatness that possesses his heart and soul. Nothing but love could have moved him to limit by

marriage his freedom to follow that ideal ; for this reason alone, in his first words to Iago there is a shadow of uneasiness about what he has done. But no Shakespearean hero has more confidence in himself: he is quietly certain that his own proved value to the State of Venice will outweigh all that Brabantio's influence and connections can do against him. All this comes out in a few lines:

Let him do his spite.
My services, which I have done the Signiori,
Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know—
Which, when I know that boasting is an honour,
I shall promulgate—I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege, and my demerits
May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune
As this that I have reached ; for know, Iago,
But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
I would not my unhoused free condition
Put into circumscription and confine
For the sea's wealth.

The curt words are not spoken to reassure himself ; they are drawn from him to silence Iago's rather impertinent pretence of solicitude. A moment later he is seen in action. Called to active service, he simply goes indoors to inform Desdemona, and is ready. And when he returns to find Brabantio's hostile sword-points encircling him, he is in his element at once:

Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them.

And:

Hold your hands,
Both you of my inclining and the rest.
Were it my cue to fight, I would have known it
Without a prompter.

Here is a fighting man too sure of himself to waste blood, and one who takes command of his enemy's forces and is obeyed, as if by natural right. The scene is enough to dispel any idea that he suffers from a sense of racial inferiority. His arrival steadies the nerves of the Senators. The Duke's

Valiant Othello, we must now employ you

is like a sigh of relief after the reports, counter-reports and panic-stricken orders of the past few minutes. Brabantio at his heels is not even noticed, till he claims redress for his wrongs before Othello leaves the country. This causes Othello to give an account of his wooing.

It is a simple and straightforward account, and yet in listening you become aware that Othello was as self-possessed in love as in war. He had played up to Desdemona's growing interest with masterly tact; it is hard to say which of them took the initiative. To the Duke, who must in any case depend on his services in Cyprus, the story is entirely convincing, and when Desdemona confirms it there is no more to be said. As if marriage were a mere digression, Othello declares himself ready to leave at once.

So far he has shown himself the ideal man of action, formidable and swift and gentle, a master of restraint in word and deed. Only when he asks to take Desdemona with him he says a little more than the situation makes necessary:

And heaven defend your good souls that you think
I shall your serious and great business scant
For she is with me. No, when light-winged toys
Of feathered Cupid seel with wanton dullness
My speculative and offic'd instruments,
That my disports corrupt and taint my business,
Let housewives make a skillet of my helm,
And all indign and base adversities
Make head against my estimation!

Why should he protest against a charge that no one has thought of bringing? The idea that love might distract him from duty comes from no mind but his own—and that is exactly why he refutes it so vehemently. He, who in all his life has loved only war, now loves Desdemona; he knows in his heart that there is danger in division, and therefore hastens to deny it. War is his business, he insists, love only his "disports." But it was not for sport that he had "put into circumscription and confine" his proud freedom; half an hour ago he had been aware of this, and telling himself otherwise will not change the fact. And Iago, who has heard both utterances, is ready to work on the hidden disquiet.

To anticipate a danger is one way of attracting it; if you except to tumble off a bicycle you are almost sure to lose your balance. There was no evident necessity—if Iago had not created it—for his two devotions to clash. Desdemona was no Cleopatra, but a selfless wife ready to subordinate herself utterly to her husband's work, and Othello knew it. But still an accusing spirit in him insisted that to love her was to betray another love. His single-minded dedication to war was a kind of chastity of spirit that made him invulnerable, and he had surrendered it. For the first time his inner self-respect was in another's keeping; if he lost that he lost everything; unconsciously he felt that he half deserved to lose it for taking the risk. It was not guilt in the normal sense, for in loving his wife he violated no moral law, but he had broken a law imposed by himself on himself and had

gone too far to retract. This was the division that made him so easily hypnotised by Iago, as if one part of himself expected the worst. It is conveyed in that troubled cry (Act III, ii), before the first germ of doubt has had time to ripen into distrust:

Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul,
But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again.

It gives him the strange words he uses, later in the same swift-moving scene, to proclaim the destruction of his peace:

Farewell the plumed troop, and the bog wars,
That make ambition virtue: O, farewell,
Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum th'ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner and all quality,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!
And, O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
The immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit;
Farewell, Othello's occupation's gone!

The thing was soon visible to others besides himself. When he struck his wife in the Venetian envoy's presence, Lodovico was deeply shocked; but his words show that the outrage on Desdemona disturbed him less than the change it signified in the general whose integrity had been the bulwark of Venice:

Is this noble Moor, whom our full senate
Call all in all sufficient? Is this the Nature
Whom passion could not shake? whose solid virtue
The shot of accident nor dart of chance
Could neither graze nor pierce?

The loss of that integrity is Othello's real tragedy; Desdemona's death, which is the fruit of it, could not restore him to himself. And yet she alone understood that the man who murdered her was not the true Othello, and died declaring that she had not been mistaken in her love. Her last words are a message of belief across the frontier of death, and do more than anything else could to soften the bleakness of his awakening.

He comes to himself at the end; as with nearly all Shakespeare's tragic heroes, the moment of death is the moment of his clearest vision. First, he grasps the meaning of Emilia's statement about the handkerchief. This in itself is proof of his sanity, for no madman could take in objective evidence against his own delusion. His inner necessity to believe in it is too strong, and if you rob him of one reason he will find another. Othello can face

the fact that proves him wrong, and though Emilia dies for her words she has broken Iago's hold on his mind.

Then he finds a sword. The familiar grip of it gives back his self-possession, and with it his gift of poetic speech. Just as his courteous rebuke to Brabantio's men

Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them—

had expressed the warrior whose weapon is his cherished comrade, so now he speaks to this sword with affectionate particularity; a blade of "the Isebrook's temper," than which

A better never did sustain itself
Upon a soldier's thigh.

He is once again Othello the warrior, who commands his captors and knows his cue without a prompter. He listens till the whole truth is out, and then in measured words gives judgement on himself. He speaks of Desdemona's death, not to justify himself but as if all punishment were beside the point: in the last words of his summing-up he sentences himself not for murder but for betraying his service as a soldier of Venice:

And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk
Beat a Venetian, and traduc'd the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog
And smote him thus.

Thus the soldier is court-martialled for desertion. But after the execution his last words are to Desdemona:

I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee, no way but this,
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss

This is a reconciliation, a belated answer to

Commend me my kind lord. O, farewell.

(3)

In an age of democratic values it is easy to confound the universal with the average. Since few men are dedicated warriors and many are husbands, modern sensibility tends to overvalue Othello the husband at the expense of Othello the fighting man. This blurs the essential tragedy, which is that of a great general wrecked on the shoal of love, and only incidentally, that of an innocent woman murdered. In reading the play, one is apt to be more impressed at first by Desdemona's sweetness of character and by Iago's frightening efficiency than by Othello; it is only on a second or third reading that the grandeur of his personality makes itself felt. But his bearing in the

first two Acts, and the way Cassio and the Senate regard him, and his own habitual language, all throw into relief the supreme general, the stay of Venice, for whom war is an exacting god whose demands he glories in fulfilling. Rightly interpreted by a great actor this must be his impact on the audience, and in the light of it every word of his final summing-up is charged with meaning.

To set *Othello* beside *Antony and Cleopatra*, and make a foot-note of the minor but illuminating study of Hotspur in *Henry IV Part I*, will suggest a Shakespearean delineation of love and war. There is man's world of war, where friends are true and foes generous, and danger is the breath of life and honour the reward of valour. It is a rigorously exacting world, exhilarating and satisfying, so long as it is not complicated by the love of woman. But woman exists, which means that a part of man exists, outside of it and at odds with all its values, and love is a disruptive force that tumbles men from its heights. Yet love has heights of its own. Shakespeare's greatest men are not those who, like Tamburlaine, can trample love under the feet of ambition.

Hotspur, who is simple enough to live and die in that masculine world, is the happiest of these three. Lightheartedly in love with his wife, he never dreams of taking her seriously, and for all her protests she is too well contented with him to mutiny. When she cannot keep him at home she follows him cheerfully to Wales, and at Glendower's court he expresses his opinion of the higher culture by teasing and flirting with her. Hotspur's narrow vision and uncomplicated nature are all of a piece with his success in keeping a woman where he thinks she ought to be. But he is too arrogantly egocentric to be the perfect knight, and Prince Hal, more complex and perceptive, outshines him even in his own sphere of the chivalry of arms.

In *Antony and Cleopatra* the man's world and the woman's world are effectively contrasted. There are boudoirs and battlefields; at one moment Enobarbus talks to Antony of the expendability of women, at another women and eunuchs discuss the ancient art of capturing men. Everything brings out the opposition of values, and Antony moves between the two, a lord of men and Cleopatra's slave. Antony has all Hotspur's gallantry and none of his narrowness; he is a much bigger man, but the very qualities that enrich his personality make him the more vulnerable to the assault of love. From the soldier's point of view and his own he is a man born for empire; the world is not well lost when he throws it away for love. Yet that is not quite the final word, for he dies for Cleopatra's love and is greater in death than in life.

Desdemona and Cleopatra are at opposite poles. Othello's conflict looks so unlike Antony's and he himself is so much finer in nature, that at first sight their tragedies are not comparable. But here too, within Othello's mind, the heroic values are invaded by the incommensurable values of love.

The man who assured the Senate that he took Desdemona with him for her contentment alone, who spoke of love as "light-winged toys of feathered Cupid", exclaimed when he met her in Cyprus:

If it were now to die,
 'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear
 My soul hath her content so absolute
 That not another comfort, like to this
 Succeeds in unknown fate.

How can this man be at one with himself? If the contradiction exists in his mind alone, nevertheless it is real there and insoluble, and is the crack through which Iago pours his poison.

In both tragedies love is an explosive, destructive force, because it cannot be contained in the heroic values by which great men live. Not that the tragedies are condemnations of love; for "safety first" is not the moral of tragedy. Antony throws away the world for Cleopatra, who may or may not be worth it, but in the end one feels that it is more worth while to be Antony with his careless extravagance than the calculating Octavius Caesar who pockets it. Othello loves not wisely but too well, but loving more wisely would not have made him a nobler man. Shakespeare pays a full tribute of admiration to the heroic values. Nevertheless he depicts the human spirit as vaster than any system of values it can formulate, never wholly governable or predictable by self-imposed principles of law.

ALDOUS HUXLEY : A CASE OF DISSOCIATION ?

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T. S. Eliot's theory of dissociation of sensibility, recently called in question by Professor Kermode,* may lack its exact chronological reference, but seems nevertheless to explain in some contexts a decline in the creative vitality of poetry. That such a dissociation belonged to life also, should necessarily follow, but few have commented upon the circumstance with the vigour and directness of Lawrence. There is no scope for tracing Lawrence's attitude to T. S. Eliot, whose essay "Metaphysical Poets" was published in 1921, containing a formulation of his theory, and Lawrence's "Women in Love" in 1916. Lawrence seems on the whole to have evolved his views on the basis of a personal observation, and when we speak of him, we are likely to be wrong in suggesting that he owed his ideas to the influence of any one else. Here the question does not arise, for the earlier date is a clear indication of the independence of his view.

In a passage in "Women in Love", Birkin denounces the intellectual bias in Hermione Roddice, the trend towards the undesirable split, which in Hermione appears as an element, repelling the man she would like to have as her lover. Birkin's language is passionate, marked by an angry violence from a sense of the young woman's desertion of the things that make for life and wholeness: "You'd be verily deliberately spontaneous... your deliberate voluntary consciousness. You want it all in that loathsome little skull of yours, that ought to be cracked like a nut". (Secker, p. 44).

What Rampion, Huxley's recreation of Lawrence, says in "Point Counter Point" (p. 108, Penguin), throws more light on the attitude: "Civilization is harmony and completeness. Reason, feeling, instinct, the life of the body—Blake managed to include and harmonize everything. Barbarism is being lopsided. You can be a barbarian of the intellect as well as of the body. A barbarian of the soul and feelings as well as of sensuality".

This is a lucid and illuminating comment. It states one of Lawrence's basic points of view. Most of his heresies could be explained in the light of this view and rendered significant as part of his conception of an integrated personality. The plea indirectly made in the passage quoted from the novel is for a unified personality, for a balanced integrated attitude in which no element in human nature would be neglected or over-stressed.

* I have not read Prof. Kermode's original statement in which he criticises Eliot's view but have come across references to it, on which I base my observations.—S.C.S.

This harmonious character belonged to the Greeks. Is unification of sensibility simply to be like the Greeks? Eliot, however, mentions in a well-known poem Webster and Donne as examples of a unified personality:

Donne, I suppose, was such another
Who found no substitute for sense;

The difference between the Greek attitude and the Elizabethan seems to be that the former balanced the elements, the latter blended them, and the great energy which the Elizabethan poets showed in their work came from the fusion. The dissociation, which weakened the fibre of poetry and robbed it of its fire may well be traced also to a wrong approach to the Greek ideal—to a love of balance in the first instance, followed by a preference for particular elements, isolated as a result of the growing spirit of enquiry, for special cultivation. The tendency to overvalue the intellect is a heritage of the scientific culture, which has grown apace since the middle of the seventeenth century. Aldous Huxley belongs to the scientific tradition, and his purely intellectual approach to problems has been fostered by his education, environment, and personal talent. Although he seems to hold the Greek view of life, we notice in his work not a balance but an over-stress, not a just ordering of the qualities of instinct, emotion and intellect but an exaggeration of the critical element. The special form of dissociation of sensibility in Huxley is perhaps the outcome of an original Hellenism, diluted and transformed into a simple preference for the intellect and an almost unqualified dependence upon it for light on every problem, belonging to the human scene. The manner in which the poets, inheriting the Elizabethan tradition, lost their capacity for unified sensibility, whose quality is suggested by Donne in his "Second Anniversary":

One might almost say, her body thought.
(Grierson, Vol. 1, p. 358)

is thus analysed by S. L. Bethell in "The Cultural Revolution of the Seventeenth Century" (p. 94): "Donne apprehended the secular world, the world of ordinary experience, in categories essentially religious. The tendency of his followers to split into groups, sacred and profane, is but one sign among many that the organic universe is crumbling and that religion is retiring from the world".

The problem of dissociation of sensibility did not arise in the case of Greek culture because its end, the fulness of life, corresponded in many ways to that of unified sensibility. Greek poetry is a poetry of fulness, it has both height and depth. Unified sensibility, which was a later product, served to discover unity, to establish a singleness of vision, in short to build upon religion as the foundation of life. The Metaphysicals wrote in this spirit. The Greek view was different. But it also became vulnerable through the

emergence of intellect as the supreme value. Among those who professed the Greek ideal, another form of dissociation arose. As already suggested, Huxley exemplifies this breakdown or dissociation.

There is a significant passage in "Point Counter Point" (p. 34), a quotation from Claud Bernard's article, published in an issue of the "Quarterly". This article had the force of an apocalyptic vision in transforming Lord Edward, until then a man without a profession or predominant interest, into a passionately devoted student of Biology:

"The living being does not form an exception to the great natural harmony which makes things adapt themselves to one another; it breaks no concord; it is neither in contradiction to, nor struggling against, general cosmic forces. Far from that, it is a member of the universal concert of things, and the life of the animal, for example, is only a fragment of the total life of the universe".

Joad in his "Guide to Modern Thought" (pp. 320-21) quotes the following passage from Huxley to illustrate the insignificance of man's beginning:

"Something that had been a single cell, a cluster of cells, a little sac of tissue, a kind of worm, a potential fish with gills, stirred in her womb and would one day become a man—a grown man, suffering and enjoying, loving and hating, thinking, remembering, imagining... what had blindly lived in her as a parasitic worm would look at the stars, would listen to music, would read poetry. A thing would grow into a person, a tiny lump of stuff would become a human body, a human mind".

Here the attitude is different from that of the Bernard passage Huxley quotes. Bernard's worm is a fragment of the total life of the universe and is exalted by its cosmic character. Huxley's man is condemned by his animal ancestry to a grossness of disposition, which he is rarely able to transcend. To understand him Huxley would follow the mode, which interpreted animal nature. His advice to a would-be novelist reveals his point of view to which he adheres in the analysis of human motive in his fiction:

"My young friend", I said, "if you want to be a psychological novelist and write about human beings, the best thing you can do is to keep a pair of cats". ("Sermon in Cats", *Music at Night*, Chatto & Windus, pp. 239-240).

Man in Huxley's novels is a slave of his body, a product of environment and a plaything in the hands of chance. Love as he depicts it, is sensuality. The physical aspect of love gets all the emphasis in his account. There seems nothing else to it except pretence to higher things, a mockery of idealism.

There is perhaps no need to illustrate the point from his novels and stories. It is seen everywhere, in his first story as in his last. It is physical control that will lead to the control of the impulses and feelings, since, he adds parenthetically, "mind and body are one" ("Eyeless in Gaza", Penguin, p. 14). There is a note of triumph in his discovery through the help of

Pavlov that we are no better than dogs: "Conditioned reflex. What a lot of satisfaction I got out of old Pavlov when first I read him. The ultimate de-bunking of all human pretensions. We were all dogs and bitches together. Bow-wow, sniff the lamp-post, lift the leg, bury the bone. No nonsense about free will, goodness, truth, and all the rest". ("Eyeless in Gaza", p. 55). In Aldous Huxley's view man is not a responsible agent:

"It was left to Blake to rationalize atomism into a philosophical system. Man, according to Blake (and, after him, according to Proust, according to Lawrence), is simply a succession of states. Good and evil can be predicated of states, not of individuals, who in fact don't exist, except as the places where the states occur. It is the end of personality in the old sense of the word". (*Ibid.*, pp. 90-91).

Huxley uses this philosophy somewhat perversely in his interpretation of character. Cardan in "Those Barren Leaves" (*Rotunda*, p. 73) says, for example, that he does not admit anything as immoral and that he can remain respectable in his own eyes and in those of others in spite of loading dice, drinking tubs of wine, and "every weakness, every vice". Here is an example of a complete split, and the dissociation which is at the root of Huxley's inadequacy.

The criticism of this attitude is put into the mouth of Rampion in "Point Counter Point". "After all, the only truth that can be of interest to us, or that we can know, is a human truth. And to discover that, you must look for it with the whole of being, not with a specialized part of it". (p. 402).

Huxley's weakness is that he is everywhere under the domination of the intellect. He achieves subtlety without depth and a tendency to dogmatism, which belongs to schools of logic. On most questions of human nature, his judgement is warped by this excessive bias. He can marshal arguments to prove his case against man like a lawyer; he can collect his data from far and near. His knowledge is not at fault but he seems to labour under an obsession, which makes him see no good in human beings until they are radically transformed. No form of human relationship is satisfactory from his point of view. Father, husband, wife, mistress, all alike fail to provide a basis for a worthy human association. To build upon them is to build upon sand. The view, however, undergoes some modification in his later work. The human state, he recognizes, is not altogether unredeemable and that under certain circumstances human relations may be worthily formed.

With these ideas it is natural that he should turn to the superhuman, that is, religion and mysticism. But even here the atmosphere had to be subjected to a sort of air-conditioning process so that the air he breathed might be intellectually purer. Christianity, the religion of love, did not appeal to him. He went to Buddhism, which is almost pure philosophy, for

his doctrine of non-attachment. What we see in this philosophy is a standard of non-human perfection, scarcely attainable by a living being. He found in life's beginnings things that made his gorge rise. What happened at death is almost equally repellent to contemplate but he does not desist from doing so; these reflexions follow Everard Webley's murder in "Point Counter Point":

"And meanwhile, from the air, the invisible hosts of saprophytics had already begun their unresisted invasion. They would live among the dead cells, they would grow, and prodigiously multiply and in their growing and procreation all the chemical building of the body would be undone, all the intricacies and complications of its matter would be resolved, till by the time their work was finished a few pounds of carbon, a few quarts of water, some lime, a little phosphorous and sulphur, a pinch of iron and silicon, a handful of mixed salts—all scattered and recombined with the surrounding world—would be all that remained of Everard Webley's ambition to rule and his love of Elinor, of his thoughts about politics and his recollections of childhood..." (p. 390).

Death thus rings down the curtain finally on the scene of our life—there is no afterwards, no form of existence beyond the grave. This is consistent with his logical assumption. Then he dives speculatively into the world of reality, which forms the province of religion. Here we pause to consider what sort of creature man is at the hands of Huxley and whether such a being can undergo religious discipline or even need it. If man is only a succession of states, and Good and Evil predicated of states, not individuals, the classification between sheep and goats is abolished. Perhaps the facile division promotes neither spiritual nor material welfare, and its loss, therefore, is hardly to be regretted. But what emerges from such a situation is the constant possibility of the unexpected and the illogical on the part of everyone because no one has now a personality conveyed by a more or less steady pattern of behaviour. Further, if mind and body are one, how can man practise even non-attachment?

The two views, quoted above, with which Huxley identifies himself, are thus inconsistent in Huxley as a religious thinker. Apparently, this idea of the body-mind relation with its suggestion of a dissociation has a clear bearing on the question of the value of Huxley's thought. Mr Propter in "After Many a Summer" and Bruno Rontini in "Time Must Have a Stop" speak a different language, and they make it clear that although they live among sensualists, in whom body and mind are one in a grossly animal sense, they have standards which distinguish them and link them to traditional modes of thought.

SHAKESPEARE'S 'TROILUS AND CRESSIDA'

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(1)

Shakespearean criticism generally agrees that *Troilus and Cressida* is "the most difficult of all Shakespeare's plays to deal with". (Dr. Furnivall). One of the main difficulties is: how to place or class it? Probably this is the reason why the First Folio (1623) put it between the histories and the tragedies, suggesting that it had the character of both. The Quarto epistle (1609) pleads that the play is a comedy and seeks to emphasise the comic genius of the author. But the epistle sounds more like special pleading with a motive, a defensive interpretation, than a precise description of the nature of the play. Probably the play caused some displeasure, and the publisher hastened to assure the reading public that it was a comedy not to be taken too seriously. *Troilus and Cressida* is not, however, a comedy, dark or otherwise, though there is something of the comic spirit in both Pandarus (I, 1 and 2) and Thersites (V, 4 and 7). The note of satire is too strong to permit the play to develop as a comedy, and both the themes of love and war end in disasters which can never be associated with a comedy.

The attempt to explain it as a problem play is equally unconvincing and unsatisfactory. In the theme of love in *Troilus and Cressida* there is no problem, while the theme of war presents a picture of war-weary camps seeking strength in the sense of honour. The Trojan conference is a debate which brings out what J. F. Danby calls "the unity of Reason and Resolve", in which the problem that is Helen is forgotten. She becomes, on the other hand, "a theme of honour and renown". In the Greek conference the pedantry of Ulysses simply urges that there is need for discipline and that the insolence of Achilles must be checked and that he must be forced to fight against Troy in the interest of the Greeks. There is no specific problem which has been systematically worked out to give *Troilus and Cressida* the character of a true problem play. 414.66.

In a sense every play is a problem play. But a true problem play, to quote L. J. Potts, "treats the situations that arise in society simply as moral or political problems in the abstract and without reference to the idiosyncrasies of human nature." A thesis play has something positive to say, as a discussion or comment or solution, usually on a problem which is explicit or implicit in the play. The difference becomes clear when the dramatist indicates the emphasis that he seeks to lay on the problem or the thesis. In *Troilus and Cressida* there is hardly any emphasis on any problem as such. The intransigence of Achilles is not a problem; he is

actually roused and does his job in his own way. The real interest of the play lies, I believe, in war and what Shakespeare thinks of it. In this sense *Troilus and Cressida* is a thesis play, but only in the Shakespearean manner, which means that it is not a propaganda play.

Troilus and Cressida is not primarily a work of imagination, and the theme is not poetically conceived and presented. Treachery and falsehood, in love or war—here is the real theme of the play which certainly stresses the seamy side of life revealed by a long-drawn war. But though the note of satire is bitter enough, all is not lost. ✓ Something really good is still left in life, though it is temporarily upset or overwhelmed. There is Troilus who is wiser. There is Ulysses who subordinates the individual to the state and tries to discover the mystery of the soul of a state which has lost its soul.

Troilus and Cressida is Shakespeare's Shavian play, but far more bitter than anything that Shaw has written. It is certainly one of Shakespeare's Plays Unpleasant. In a broad sense, it is a thesis play on war, with love woven into its texture. The Prologue says:

Like or find fault, do as your pleasures are,
Now good or bad, 'tis but the chance of war.

The title of the play is based on the love episode but it is possible to interpret the "falsehood" of Cressida as an intimate part of the corruption which is war. It is possible, again, to think of it as weakness rather than evil, for there is a ring of sincerity in Cressida's love in the earlier part of the play, which has a faint echo even in the betrayal scene:

'Twas one that loved me better than you will. ✓
(V, 2.)

But then it is difficult to ignore the comment of Ulysses: ✓

There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip;
Nay, her foot speaks, her wanton spirits look out
At every joint, and motive of her body:
(IV, 5.)

A change in "character-conception" is not at all rare in Shakespearean drama.

Only a very small part of the thesis of *Troilus and Cressida* is indicated by Shaw: "Homer presented Achilles and Ajax as heroes In due time came Shakespeare who said virtually: I really cannot accept this spoilt child and this brawny fool as great men Consequently we have in *Troilus and Cressida* the verdict of Shakespeare's epoch (our own) on the pair." There is, again, the following passage in the Quarto epistle (1609):
' . . . were but the vain names of comedies chang'd for the titles of commodities or of plays for pleas . . . " The passage is rather obscure. What

is really meant by "plays for pleas"? Is the phrase in any way related to the idea of a thesis play?

Much of Elizabethan or Shakespearean drama is what Johnson called "mingled drama". Johnson was not in favour of dividing Shakespeare's plays into histories, comedies and tragedies, and Shakespeare himself recognised the mixture in *Hamlet* (II, 2.): "The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene indivisible or poem unlimited." Chaotic conditions, indeed, for a classicist! But such blends were quite common in Elizabethan drama. { In *Troilus and Cressida*, however, the notes of satire and tragedy are almost equally pronounced. In a sense, *Troilus and Cressida* is the tragedy of Troy. In the love theme the tragedy of separation becomes the tragedy of betrayed love. In the war theme Hector is killed. It is the Greeks who win, and the Trojans who lose. Diomedes is in the love theme what Achilles is in the theme of war. The tragedy of Troilus is his loss of Cressida; the tragedy of Hector is his loss of life; and both Diomedes and Achilles are false to honour, which is Shakespeare's satire. But there is a touch of sympathy in the relation between Troilus and Ulysses, the leading figures in the two camps, as they come to like and respect each other. The range of Elizabethan drama is, I think, wide enough to permit the inclusion of *Troilus and Cressida* as a satiric thesis play in the form of a tragedy.

The thesis of the play is the ravage of war, a merciless delineation of disorder and corruption, selfishness and vanity, treachery and falsehood, the debasement of man. Helen is a strumpet, Patroclus a "masculine whore". Pandarus is a lewd bawd, and Thersites a snarling cur. Ajax is an insolent fool. Achilles is a treacherous coward. Ulysses is at times only a mean plotter. Even Hector has his frailty, his weakness for the armour which costs him his life. The general sense of confusion appears in the voice of Achilles:

My mind is troubled like a fountain stirr'd,
And I myself see not the bottom of it.

(III, 3.)

There is an unnerving tension of misgiving and insecurity, fear and suspicion, all throughout the play. Gone are all the illusions of romance, and the poetry of the Trojan war has been defeated by its prose. Rightly does H. Fluchère remark: "A whole world is breaking up on the windy plains of Troy."

(2)

But there is a deeper level of the thesis, which is Time in its relation to Appearance and Reality. L. C. Knights points out: "Why, Shakespeare

seems to be asking, has time its apparently overwhelming power? The answer towards which the play seems to tend is that time is an ultimate reality to those who live in a world of appearance." The time theme comes probably from Norden's *Vicissitudo* (according to G. B. Harrison) and Hawes's *Pastime of Pleasure* (according to Prof. Tillyard). In IV, 5, Hector says:

There they stand yet: and modestly I think,
The fall of every Phrygian stone will cost
A drop of Grecian blood: the end crowns all,
And that old common arbitrator, Time,
Will one day end it.

It seems to be an echo of Hawes's passage:

Do not I, Tyme, cause nature to decay ...
In tyme Troye the cyte was edyfied;
By tyme also was the destruccyon.

Time appears again and again in *Troilus and Cressida* on the planes of love and war. Even Pandarus says: "Well, the gods are above; time must friend or end." (I, 2.) Again, Ulysses to Nestor:

I have a young conception in my brain,
Be you my time to bring it to some shape.
(I, 3.)

In a passage central to the play, for which Shakespeare carefully prepares the ground, Ulysses says:

Time hath, my Lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion:
A great siz'd monster of ingratiitudes
For time is like a fashionable host,
That slightly shakes his parting guest by th' hand
And with his arms out-stretch'd, as he would fly,
Grasps in the comer
..... for beauty, wit,
Love, friendship, charity are subjects all
To envious and calumniating time.

(III, 3.)

When Diomedes comes to take Cressida, Paris says:

There is no help:
The bitter disposition of the time will have it so.
(IV, 1.)

Troilus to Cressida:

Injurious time now with a robber's haste
Crams his rich thievery up, he knows not how.

(IV, 4.)

Thus throughout the play oblivion, ingratitude, destruction, envy, the power to give shape to events, interference in human life, etc. are associated with time in respect of the course of both love and war. Wilson Knight says: "Throughout this play . . . we have a philosophy of love which regards it as essentially un-at-home in time . . . The love-interest turns on this theme: the theme of immediate value, killed or apparently killed by time." D. A. Traversi comments: "The tragedy consists less in the personal suffering of Troilus than in the overriding influence exercised by time upon human relationship and feelings."

Though there is not a single passage in which Shakespeare tells us *what Time is*, we may interpret Time as a mysterious force beyond the control of man, operating in an inexplicable and incalculable way, and nearly always baffling the aims and intentions of man. By rousing Achilles it certainly serves the aim of Ulysses but it also mocks his policy which, as Thersites says, "grows into an ill-opinion." Time succeeds where the policy fails. But Achilles was partly roused by the stratagem of Ulysses. Time's work did the rest.

What has not been noticed is that Shakespeare uses other terms like *accident*, *chance*, *destiny*, *fate*, *fortune* and *luck* in the play, sometimes in the very context in which *time* appears. It is thus possible to interpret *time* as only a facet or an aspect or agent of the force of *fate* against which is pitted the force of the human *will*. There is enough evidence in the play to prove the conflict between these two forces, which is not really very different from the traditional pattern of the conflict between character and fate in a tragedy. I think that the will-motif has been ignored, while the time-motif has been over-emphasised by the interpreters of *Troilus and Cressida*.

The importance of the role of will is recognised by Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida*. In the Greek council Agamemnon says:

Sith every action that hath gone before,
Whereof we have record, trial did draw
Bias and thwart, not answering the aim . . .
..... which are indeed nought else
But the protractive trials of great Jove,
To find persistive constancy in men;
The fineness of which metal is not found
In fortune's love:

(I, 3.)

Nestor holds the same view:

In the reproof of chance
Lies the true proof of man...
..... Even so
Doth valour's show and valour's worth divide
In storms of fortune.

(I, 3.)

But Ulysses detects the malady:

The specialty of rule hath been neglected...
The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
Observe degree, priority, and place...

(I, 3.)

What Ulysses means is that when the discipline of will is impaired, "The enterprise is sick."

Then every thing includes itself in power,
Power into will, will into appetite,
And appetite, an universal wolf,
So doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And last, eat up himself ...
Troy in our weakness lives, not in her strength.

(I, 3.)

It is a long preparation but it does lead to what Ulysses calls "policy" which is planned action issuing from will:

No, make a lottery
And by device let blockish Ajax draw
The sort to fight with Hector.

(I, 3.)

But it is not lottery, for Ulysses leaves nothing to chance. It is true that Ulysses lectures on "envious and calumniating time" but the speech is really meant to be a spur to will:

... .. perseverance, dear my Lord,
Keeps honour bright.

(III, 3.)

Again in the Trojan council the subject of discussion is will:

Troilus: What's aught but as 'tis valued?
Hector: But value dwells not in particular will ...
 'Tis mad idolatry,
 To make the service greater than the god,
 And the will dotes that is inclinable
 To what infectiously itself affects
Troilus: I take today a wife, and my election
 Is led on in the conduct of my will;
 My will enkindled by mine eyes and ears,
 Two traded pilots 'twixt the dangerous shores
 Of will and judgment. How may I avoid,
 Although my will distaste what it elected,
 The wife I chose

(II, 2.)

Finally, Hector allows his will to be subordinated to that of Troilus:

I propend to you
 In resolution to keep Helen still.

(II, 2.)

In the councils where we have various manifestations of will the dominant figures are Ulysses and Troilus, and they seem to follow the same course of action. Ulysses wants to rouse Achilles who refuses to fight. Troilus similarly tries to rouse Hector who does not want to continue the fight against the Greeks. So Helen is made "a theme of honour and renown", a spur to "valiant and magnanimous deeds". Even the challenge of Hector is meant to "wake" Achilles. It is interesting to note how both Ulysses and Troilus work on the lines which bring about the encounter between Hector and Achilles. Like Troilus, again, Ulysses tries to rouse Achilles by tempting him with the prospects of fame and honour. The will in action is given its full value when Agamemnon prefers "a stirring dwarf" to "a sleeping giant." Ulysses repeats the idea:

Since things in motion sooner catch the eye
 Than what not stirs.

(III, 3.)

The manifestation of will is, however, naturally different on the plane of love, when Troilus addresses Cressida: "This is the monstrosity of love, Lady, that the will is infinite, and the execution confined; that the desire is boundless, and the act a slave to limit." (III, 2.) The painful irony of *true*

and *false* in III, 3, and IV, 4, is again an indication of the conflict between the working of will and the operation of fate. The betrayal scene is a further study in will, and again the main figures are Ulysses and Troilus. Diomedes and Cressida are like figures in a play-within-the-play, and the reaction of Troilus is far more important than what happens between Diomedes and Cressida. The betrayal scene is a bitter trial of will and a cruel award of wisdom:

There is between my will, and all offences,
A guard of patience; stay a little while.
(V, 2.)

There is also a discipline of thought:

Think we had mothers
Nothing at all, unless that this were she.
(V, 2.)

But the shock is also a release of will, and the rest of the play is vibrant with quick action.

(3)

Theodore Spencer deals with the motif of appearance and reality in Shakespearean drama as a metaphysical problem, and its social implication is pointed out by L. C. Knights. But this motif is peculiar neither to *Troilus and Cressida* nor to Shakespeare, and drama from *Everyman* to T. S. Eliot is instinct with the sense of appearance and reality which constitutes the core of life. What is not noticed is that in Shakespeare this motif is less metaphysical and social but more dramatic. It is very often part of the dramatic device of the irony which Shakespeare systematically employs in *Troilus and Cressida*.

In the Greek council Nestor shows the distinction between "valour's show" and "valour's worth" as an affirmation of faith in will without which further moves in the fight cease to have any motivation. The only item on the agenda of the Trojan council is Nestor's offer:

Deliver Helen, and all damages else . . .
Shall be struck off.
(II 2.)

Naturally the question of Helen's "worth" arises. The irony of the situation is that Hector who is right yields to Troilus who is wrong, and both are ruined. That Troilus does not know what "worth" is only shows his lack of wisdom which, in course of the dramatic transaction, becomes his costly

purchase. There is irony when Shakespeare makes Troilus use the pearl-image for Cressida and Helen, both of whom are "worthless."

Her bed is India, there she lies, a pearl...
Ourself the merchant....

(I, i.)

Why, she is a pearl,
Whose price hath launch'd above a thousand ships,
And turn'd crown'd kings to merchants.

(II, 2.)

This is what Diomedes says of Helen:

For every false drop in her bawdy veins,
A Grecian's life hath sunk: for every scruple
Of her contaminated carrion weight
A Trojan hath been slain.

(IV, 1.)

And yet Helen is to Troilus "a theme of honour and renown." There is irony in the contrast between the two rivals in love, for when Troilus says: "I charge thee use her well, even for my charge", the reply from Diomedes is:

I'll nothing do on charge: to her own worth
She shall be priz'd:

(IV, 4.)

And the irony becomes an agony when in the great betrayal scene which reminds us of *Othello*, IV, 1—a study of the similarity and contrast between the two is a lesson in dramatic art—Troilus comes to know the "worth" of Cressida. The dramatic irony of the appearance-and-reality motif is too strong in III, 3, IV, 4 and V, 2, especially in the verbal pattern of *true* and *false*, to require explanation. The three scenes are the three courses in irony developing into the following climax:

..... *This is, and is not Cressid:*
Within my soul, there doth conduce a fight
Of this strange nature, that a thing inseparate
Divides more wider than the sky and earth:
And yet the spacious breadth of this division,
Admits no orifex for a point as subtle,
As Ariachne's broken woof to enter.

(V, 2.)



Here is a fugitive moment that leaves a permanent experience, and the discovery by Troilus that to him Cressida is both appearance and reality is the dichotomy which is both pity and irony in the satiric thesis-tragedy of *Troilus and Cressida*.

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THE NATURAL PIETY OF WORDSWORTH

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For an adequate appreciation of the natural piety of Wordsworth we shall do well to discuss first his attitude from the beginning to his ancestral religion. Wordsworth's family belonged to the High Church. His mother was a good churchwoman, who "once sent him to catechism with a nosegay on his breast, and another time rebuked him for complaining that they had not given him a penny at Church"⁽¹⁾. His maternal uncle with whom Dorothy lived for years was the Rector of Fornsett and a Canon of Windsor. These were the conditions at home in the midst of which he grew up.

The school at Hawkshead as well as the University where he studied was a Church of England foundation. From childhood onwards he thus breathed an atmosphere of Anglican Church. But this does not mean that he was a notably pious child, nor is there any other evidence to show this. In the records relating to his life at this period, there is no mention of religious crises, which are a common feature of adolescence. His passionate love of Nature saved him from all besetting experiences. Wordsworth thus appears to have accepted his ancestral creed without much reflection. But it deserves mention that even in his early life a deeper faith, more personal in character but as yet vague and undefined, was present with him during his solitary excursions to his native mountains. The poet relates a number of his experiences, of which this is one:-

"Yes, I remember, when the changeful earth,
And twice five seasons on my mind had stamp'd
The faces of the moving year, even then,
A Child, I held unconscious intercourse
With the eternal Beauty, drinking in
A pure organic pleasure from the lines
Of curling mist, or from the level plain
Of waters colour'd by the steady clouds"⁽²⁾.

He tells us how among the mountains in his school days, Nature clothed his mind with beautiful images. But there is something more that he tells us—he held unconscious intercourse with the Eternal Spirit Who reveals Himself through the visible aspect of the universe. But these revelations, which very often came to him when he was a child, were a usual pheno-

(1) J. C. Smith. *A Study of Wordsworth* (1944), p. 83, (Memoirs, I. p. 9). (2) *Prelude* Ll. 586-593.

menon of his life up to the age of twenty-one when he visited the Alps. All the elements of the scene observed by him during this visit are taken to be the workings of One Mind.

"Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The type and symbol of Eternity,
Of first and last, and midst, and without end".⁽³⁾

These visions were clouded for a time by sexual and political emotions. Among the causes of the disease which beset him, he has mentioned only his great concern for public and political affairs. But we know from the account given by later biographers that his anxieties about his own future and the fate of Annette and her child very likely aggravated the disease, but this episode had nothing to do with the early decline of his inspiration as a poet. This strong malady left its mark in *Guilt and Sorrow*, *The Borderers*, and in the first draft of *The Ruined Cottage*. He was apparently restored to health when he settled down at Racedown. The loving friendship of his sister and Coleridge helped him in his recovery. With Rousseau he came to cherish the same view that though there was reason to grieve over "what man has made of man"⁽⁴⁾, Nature remained uncontaminated and as fresh as when she came from her Maker's hand. The real way to happiness was, therefore, a return to Nature, particularly to the life of feeling and instinct. It was in such a mood that most of the poems of the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* were written.

But it was not possible for Wordsworth to remain content for long with a life of feeling and instinct in contact with Nature. As he regained his mental health completely, his former visionary power revived. Through Nature he began to look to Nature's God who is "The Wisdom and the Spirit of the Universe", and whom he addresses thus:

"Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought !
That giv'st to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion ! not in vain,
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
Of Childhood didst Thou entwine for me
The passions that build up our human Soul,
Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man,
But with high objects, with enduring things,
With life and nature".⁽⁵⁾

Here we find how the poet passed from a life of instinct and feeling or rather senses to a spiritual life leading to the threshold of mystical revelation of God. But a revelation like this was different from his earlier

(3) Prelude VI, 570-1. (4) *Lines Written in Early Spring*. (5) *The Prelude* LI. 429-437.

visions, not based upon a knowledge of pain and evil. This knowledge came later when he reached his full stature as a poet. He had moreover learnt to see the significance of his visionary experiences through the help of Coleridge. Thus the three distinct phases of experience mingled with the main stream of Wordsworth's poetic genius and made the poetry of the one particular decade so great. These are sensationalism, mysticism, and transcendentalism.

We shall discuss his sensationalism first, by which I mean a theory of senses as the source of knowledge. In the poems of the *Lyrical Ballads* the poet made the senses the ground-work of his poetry. These poems afford examples of pure sensationalism without any colouring of mysticism. The gospel of eyes and ears intrudes at every point. He thought the eye to be "the most despotic of our senses"⁽⁶⁾. The poet wants us to bring to bear a heart "that watches and receives"⁽⁷⁾. Referring to the influence of Nature on the bodily sense he says:

"While yet a child, and long before his time
He had perceived the presence and the power
Of greatness, and deep feelings had impressed
Great objects on his mind, with portraiture
And colour so distinct, that on his mind
They lay like substances, and almost seemed
To haunt the bodily sense"⁽⁸⁾.

He was fond of roaming all alone in darkness in order to catch the subtlest vibrations of sound. Referring to the ear he tells us,

"...and yet I do know not how,
More than the other senses does it hold
A manifest communion with the heart"⁽⁹⁾.

We should do well to remember that it is because of the endowment of his organic sensibility that the external objects of Nature could have such vivid impressions on his mind. The bodily eye as he distinguishes it from the inner eye was extraordinarily sensitive and active in his youth. He tells us of "The power of a peculiar eye"⁽¹⁰⁾ and says, it could find no surface where its power might sleep. His ear was equally developed. Aural images meant as much to him as the visual. The poem "There was a boy" is an example of this. The bodily eye and the bodily ear did not remain despotic throughout the poet's life. They united at times with the universal life in Nature. In his Preface to the poem which he placed first under the head of "Poems of Imagination", 1815, he says:

"I have begun with one of the earliest processes of Nature in the deve-

(6) *The Prelude*, XI, 174 (7) *The Tables Turned*. (8) P. W. Vol., V (Ed. by E. de Selincourt & Helen Darbishire, 1940-49), p. 381. (9) *Ibid*, p. 341. Fragment (1798?). (10) *The Excursion*, I, 157.

lopment of this faculty. Guided by one of my own primary consciousnesses, I have represented a transfer of internal feelings, cooperating with external accidents, to plant for immortality images of sound and sight in the celestial soil of the Imagination. The boy there introduced, is listening with something of a feverish and restless anxiety for the recurrence of those riotous sounds, which he had previously excited, and at the moment when the intenseness of his mind is beginning to remit, he is surprised into a perception of the solemn tranquillizing images which the poem describes".

And the boy described here is none other than Wordsworth himself, for, as Miss Helen Derbshire points out, an early manuscript of the passage is written in the first person.

On one occasion, De Quincey tells us, he along with the poet waited on Dunmail Raise for more than one hour. Several times Wordsworth stretched himself to the ground and applied his ear to it to catch the rumbling sound of wheels at a distance. It happened that once as he was rising from the ground, his eye fell upon a bright star. For a short while he looked intently upon it and then made the following remark:—

"I have remarked, from my earliest days, that, if under any circumstances the attention is energetically braced up to an act of steady observation, should suddenly relax, at that moment any beautiful, any impressive visual object, or collection of objects, falling upon the eye, is carried to the heart with a power not known under other circumstances. Just now, my ear was placed upon the stretch, in order to catch any sound of wheels that might come down upon the lake of Wythburn from the Keswick road; at the very instant when I raised my head from the ground, in final abandonment of hope for this night, at the very instant when the organs of attention were all at once relaxing from their tension, the bright star...fell suddenly upon my eye, and penetrated my capacity of apprehension with a pathos and a sense of the infinite, that would not have arrested me under other circumstances"(11). The two examples give us a clue to Wordsworth's mental processes involved in the revelation of the Infinity through the objects of Nature and the mediation of the senses.

Wordsworth's theories are based upon his own experiences of sensations. To Wordsworth Man and Nature are two distinct entities. The Mind of Man represents the creative energy and Nature the reproductive. In "The Recluse" he says:

"For the discerning intellect of Man
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these
A simple produce of the common day".(12)

(11) *Recollections of the Lake Poets*, Ed. E. Sackville-West (1948), p. 144. (12) Preface to *The Excursion* (1814).

Since Mind and Nature are observed by him to be different entities, he is absolutely free from an expression of sentimentality towards Nature, characterizing romantic poetry. Mind and Nature, though they both come from God, are independent of each other but they often join hands to fulfil the purpose of creation.

But to have communion with Nature, the mind must first be realised by an individual. Wordsworth has a great deal to say on the subject, which recalls the views of David Hartley, the philosopher. In his book, "*William Wordsworth, his Doctrine and Art in their Historical Relations*", Arthur Beatty has attempted to show how deeply Wordsworth was indebted to this philosopher. Opinions, however, differ. Beatty declares that *The Prelude* is nothing but an interpretation of Hartley's philosophy in terms of the poet's own experience. Others (A. E. Powell, J. W. Beach, and J. C. Smith) hold that though he might have read Hartley casually, or heard about his doctrines from Coleridge, Wordsworth's debt to him was only superficial. At deeper levels, they differed greatly from each other. Smith believes that Wordsworth's conception of the origin of the human mind and of God differed radically from Hartley's ideas on the same subject. To Hartley, the mind at birth is a *tabula rasa*. But wordsworth tells us,

"Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home".¹³

Moreover Hartley believed that we turn to God out of a desire to enjoy the bliss of Heaven and avoid the misery of Hell. But to Wordsworth "God is our home". Again, it is said that Wordsworth learnt his optimism from Hartley. But Wordsworth's optimism was rooted in the destiny of the human soul and its power to transmute suffering, whereas the optimism of Hartley originated with an idea of painful and pleasurable sensations. Our pleasurable sensations being far more numerous than those which are painful, there is a reasonable ground of optimism in our attitude towards life. Whatever opinion is held by Smith and others, Wordsworth seems to be substantially in accord with Hartley in spite of the differences to which attention has been drawn. A close examination of the works of the two writers will make this clear.

In the theory of association, three stages in the development of the human mind have been observed by Hartley and his predecessors. The first is the stage of sensation or childhood, the second, the stage of simple ideas or youth and the third, the stage of complex ideas or maturity. To these Wordsworth's own development seems to correspond, as recorded in

(13) *Ode. Intimations of Immortality*, V.

The Prelude or *Tintern Abbey*. In the latter poem, the "glad animal movements" of childhood give way to the "passions" and "appetites" of youth, which in their turn lead to "that serene and blessed mood" on attainment of manhood when we "become a living soul". The three stages of man are interrelated as are the impressions of sensation, simple ideas and complex ideas. In both the cases the first leads to the second and the second to the third.

So far Wordsworth is in perfect accord with Hartley. But the crucial question arises when the poet tells us about the visionary power that often came to him when meditating on some aspect of Nature. He was subject to such visions, he tells us, from his childhood. But in Hartley's scheme, there is no place for visions. It is at this point that we come across the poet's originality. It is this visionary power that reveals to him the glory of a world not seen with human eyes. It is a mystic vision which gives rise to

"a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;
A motion and a spirit, which impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things".¹⁴

What is the nature of this mystic vision about which he tells us and how is it evoked ? It is "a sense sublime", or rather a supersense which cannot be gained by discarding the visible world, but by embracing all objects within its purview. Those who in their eagerness for communion with the divine give up the visible world enter a region of darkness. They enter the region of darkness as well as those who pursue the knowledge of the fragmentary for its own sake. Wordsworth, like a true visualist, is able to reconcile the spiritual world to the world of the senses. It is through the world of the senses, the light of the setting suns, the round ocean, the living air and the blue sky that he gets a clear vision of the supersensuous world. He rises to the supersensuous through the sensuous, and is happy to live in a world where the two merge into each other. Like his own skylark he does not soar so high as to lose contact with the real world, nor does he pin down his faith to the visible world, which can be apprehended by the senses only. He keeps himself

"True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home".¹⁵

(14) *Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey.* (15) *To A Skylark.*

Wordsworth looked forward to a time when science shall be touched by the glow of inspiration obtained from a knowledge of eternity:

“For then her heart shall kindle; her dull eye,
Dull and inanimate, no more shall hang
Chained to its object in brute slavery”.¹⁶

Science, according to the poet, which deals with bare facts without aiming at the knowledge of the ultimate truth, is like a lamp without its light or a lyer without its music. But this does not mean that we should have no regard for scientific fact. The warning that the poet gives to the scientist is that the world as we see it is not the ultimate reality, but only a portion of it. The external world should not be regarded as a separate entity, cut off from the world of infinity and boundless space. He had from his early youth mystical experiences visualising unity in diversity, born out of the contact of his mind with the world. He tells us :

“... in all things now
I saw one life, and felt that it was joy.
One song they sang, and it was audible,
Most audible then when the fleshly ear,
O’ercome by grosser prelude of that strain,
Forgot its functions, and slept undisturb’d.”¹⁷

When he was a child, very often, he says,

“such a holy calm
Did overspread my soul, that I forgot
That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw
Appear’d like something in myself, a dream
A prospect in my mind”.¹⁸

This realisation of the existence of an active principle of unity in diversity is the very core of mysticism. There are numerous passages in *The Prelude* and elsewhere to show that the poet was frequently subject to such experiences. And how did this kind of realisation come to him? The poem *There was a Boy*, and the *Dunmail Raise* episode, related by De Quincey and referred to above, illustrate the mental processes which produced such experience. The poet himself said that whenever he came in contact with some external object which deeply stirred his emotions, the removal of the object from his presence by causing a temporary hiatus of his senses, revealed to him at once the invisible, the one inseparable world. This is what happens to him when “The light of the sense Goes out”¹⁹ or “we are laid asleep in body.”²⁰

(16) *The Excursion*, IV, 1254-6. (17) *The Prelude*, II, 429-434. (18) *Ibid.*, 367-371.
(19) *The Prelude*, VI. (20) *Tintern Abbey*.

There is one curious fact to be noticed in connection with his mystical experiences, that is, they are almost all associated with the mountain, scenes such as the Alps, the Snowdown, and the slippery rocks in the act of stealing birds from the snares of other people, or in the midst of scenes viewed in a background of mountains, such as we find in *The Solitary Reaper*, the *Lucy* poems, *The Daffodils*, *To the Cuckoo* and *Nutting*. Wordsworth was pre-eminently a poet of mountains. Divested of the mountain scene, his *Michael*, his *Leech-Gatherer*, his *Lucy*, even he himself as a child in *The Prelude* would lose half the charm. If we ask why Wordsworth preferred to depict mountain-scenes in his poems, the answer that would come readily to us is that he was born and brought up among mountain-scenes. But there is also another explanation and that is, the poet was born with a mystical bent of mind. The thought of Infinity as suggested by boundless space and vastness of the universe haunted his imagination from his early childhood. The solemnity of the mountains, their massiveness and height, their naked beauty, unspoilt by human hand, and their freshness and purity served as an excellent medium of communication between the mysterious forces of the universe and the poet's soul. Compared with the immensity of the mountain-ranges human beings and their efforts appear puny and insignificant. We are reminded of our little fretful selves and this helps us to endure the ills of life with a Roman courage, and resign our will to the will of Him who is the source of all life. It is on account of this that we find a kind of pathos in the men and women whose emotions he depicts against the background of mountains. With their dignity of character, purity of hearts and poignancy of sorrow, they fuse very well with the scene and touch the innermost chords of our hearts. These are mostly solitary beings, who have known sorrow and who try amongst the solemn scenes of the mountains to find an anchor for their purest thoughts. His *Leech-Gatherer*, his *Michael*, his *Solitary Reaper*, his *Wanderer* in *The Excursion*, are all touched with this spirit.

The point worth noticing in this connection is that the poems describing his mystical experiences among the mountain-scenes and other places abound in words indicating solitude and simplicity. These experiences come to him when he himself or the human being he depicts is alone on a "lonely Mountain"²¹ or "the lonesome wild"²² in a valley or wood. On one occasion when he was alone he tells us,

"I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps,
Almost as silent as the turf they trod."²³

(21) *The Prelude*, XIII, 67. (22) *Lucy Gray*. (23) *The Prelude*, I, 329-332.

He speaks of the "Visions of the hills! and Souls of lonely places"²⁴ and also

"the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round"²⁵.

The daffodils, he says,

"flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude."²⁶

His Lucy was Nature's child who led a lonely life among "Untrodden ways" and who was like a

"A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye"²⁷

"A gentle shock of mild surprise" came to him when he was standing alone beneath the trees blowing "mimic hootings to the silent owls".²⁸ He tells us,

"I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
The silent trees, and the intruding sky".²⁹

A favourite pleasure with him has been

"From time of earliest youth, to walk alone
Along the public Way, when, for the night
Deserted, in its silence it assumes
A character of deeper quietness
The pathless solitudes."³⁰

As he viewed the beauty of the mountain-scenery, bathed in moonlight while climbing Snowdown, he says:

"A meditation rose in me that night
Upon the lonely Mountain when the scene
Had pass'd away, and it appear'd to me
The perfect image of a mighty Mind
Of one that feeds upon Infinity".³¹

Solitude is the theme of Wordsworth's long life. It is also the keynote of his poetry. In his childhood and youth he was a great lover of solitude and sought it as a means of poetic grace. It is

"On Man, on Nature and on human life,
Musing in solitude"

(24) *Ibid.*, 490-91. (25) *Influence of Natural Objects*. (26) *I wandered lonely as a cloud*. (27) *She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways*. (28) *There Was A Boy*. (29) *Nutting*. (30) *The Prelude*, IV, 364-68. (31) *The Prelude* XIII, 66-69.

that he often perceives "Fair trains of imagery before me rise"³². As a boy he tells us,

"Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch
Far earlier, and before the vernal thrush
Was audible, among the hills I sate
Alone, upon some jutting eminence
At the first hour of morning, when the Vale
Lay quiet in an utter solitude."³³

The crowd has no attraction for him. The busy life of London fails to impress him. He loves to view her when "All the mighty heart is lying still".³⁴ and when she

"doth, like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning : silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the field, and to the sky".³⁵

His Wanderer, "A herdsman on the lonely mountain tops"³⁶

"in the mountains did he feel his faith"³⁷

It may be because he is the poet of the mountains, he is in a much greater sense, the poet of solitude also. The low breathings among the mountains are hardly audible except in solitude. But apart from mountain-scenes, solitude in all places and solitary things had a great fascination for him. Nature does not yield her treasures to one who does not woo her with a single-minded devotion. For this it is necessary to become a solitary and to court solitude.

All his great poems are triumphs of solitude and solitaires. The "Lucy" poems particularly afford supreme examples of his love of solitude. Even the very titles of his poems suggest loneliness. One is actually named *Solitude*, later changed to *Lucy Gray*, and *The Solitary Reaper* was similarly changed to *The Highland Reaper* by the editor of *The Golden Treasury*. The opening lines of *Solitude* which suggest solitariness are rounded off by the closing lines, suggesting the same forlorn feeling giving to the whole poem a visionary touch.

"Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child ;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.

.....

(32) Preface to *The Excursion*. (33) *The Prelude* II, 359-64. (34) *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge*, Sept. 3, 1803. (35) *Ibid.* (36) *The Excursion*, I, 219. (37) *Ibid.*, 226.

O'er rough and smooth she trips along
 And never looks behind;
 And sings a solitary song
 That whistles in the wind".

The theme of solitude is treated here in the ballad style, the theme which centres round the story of a lonely child. He treats the same theme with a difference in *The Solitary Reaper*. The human figure is seen here in a beautiful setting. She is solitary, no doubt, singing by herself, single in the field, but the whole valley is vibrating with her music.

"Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
 And sings a melancholy strain;
 O Listen! for the vale profound
 Is overflowing with the sound".

Love of simplicity is also one of the notable qualities of Wordsworth's character. This notion is conveyed by the frequent use of the word "naked" in his poetry. Anything that is bare, naked, or bald seems in the imagination of the poet to be invested with an idealising quality. To have a true vision of God, the poet held, the mind must be freed from all impure and distracting thoughts. It must acquire a state of "blank desertion", so that God's footprints upon it may become discernible. The mind will then become an abode of sublime thoughts and will experience a state of perennial calm and peace. He had one of those visions of mystic communion with God, he says, when

"Gently did my soul
 Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood
 Naked as in the presence of her God".³⁸

He tells us about himself as "A naked boy...Made one long bathing of a summer's day"³⁹, and also "Shouldering the naked crag", while he lay "Suspended by the blast which blew amain".⁴⁰ When "The Moon stood naked in the Heavens",⁴¹

"A meditation rose in me that night
 That is exalted by an underpresence
 The sense of God".⁴²

He tells us of "naked huts"⁴³, "naked pools"⁴⁴, "naked valleys"⁴⁵, "a naked Pool"⁴⁶, "a naked wall"⁴⁷, and "the naked top of bold headland"⁴⁸. The examples of the use of the word "naked" given above show the poet's love of simplicity as opposed to artificiality and his great concern for the spiritual.

(38) *The Prelude*, IV, 140-142. (39) *The Prelude*, I, 292-4. (40) *Ibid.*, 345-346.
 (41) *The Prelude*, XIII, 41. (42) *Ibid.* 66f. (43) *Ibid.* VI, 450. (44) *Ibid.* 245.
 (45) *Ibid.* VIII, 792. (46) *Ibid.* XI, 304. (47) *Ibid.* XI, 358. (48) *The Excursion*, I, 198-99.

INTERPRETATIONS

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(1)

HER VISION IN THE WOOD

The title may briefly be explained: the vision is that of Adonis, slain by a boar. Loved by Aphrodite, Adonis is a symbol of love. The wood is the sacred wood at Nemi in Italy, the site of the temple of Diana, guarded by the King of the Wood. The sacred wood stands for tradition, for the culture of Western Europe. The reason for making the vision a feminine experience seems to be a desire on the part of the poet to assume a *persona* or mask for the repudiation of culture and the interests of a purely intellectual or aesthetic kind in favour of the demands of life, for the assertion of a higher value discovered in love. For this a woman's role seems to possess a clear appropriateness.

"Dry timber under the rich foliage" (line 1)—The 'rich foliage' will suggest the growth of intellectual culture, an expansion of tradition for which the sacred wood provided the earliest home. "Dry timber" is the starved life which has failed to respond to the emotions. The luxuriant intellectual heritage is contrasted with our human state with an excessive stress on the intellect and a resultant dryness or desiccation; "wine dark" is an epithet that carries us back to Homer in whom the expression occurs¹, and it is still another allusion to the culture which the poet finds to be in conflict with life; "midnight" will indicate a specially propitious hour for as intellectual and spiritual adventure:

"Too old for man's love I stood in rage
Imagining men". (Stanza 1. 3-4)

Although we have here the words of a woman, we cannot get the idea with complete precision until we identify the woman with our old civilization, which seems to have travelled very far away from the emotional life in the zeal for intellectual attainments. Love has thus to be brought back, created as it were by the power of imagination, and in the belief that the sense of void could be covered by an immediate pain, the greater pain forgotten by means of one of less intensity, the woman tears open her body.

(1) "Wine dark sea"; "a watch tower over the wine dark sea"; "across the wine dark sea", etc. (*Iliad*, Bk. II, The Penguin Classics, p. 56; Bk. V., p. 113; Bk. VII, p. 134, etc.).

Her secondary object is to see if blood still ran within her, if she could concentrate on the vision of love ("lip of lover"), thus traversing the distance that isolated her in a world of intellectual experience.

"to find if withered vein ran blood" (Stanza 1. 6). Here is an attempt to explore if the dried shell of an intellectual civilization still contained within it those resources of instinct and impulse without which the emotion of love would be out of our reach. The wound which destroys Adonis is followed by revival. The blood the woman draws from her body symbolizes death and a like revival by way of the vision and a vicarious experience of love. The sight of blood opens the door to the vision, which re-establishes love as an overwhelming power in human life, and also bridges the gulf between art and life. In the first stanza there is a deliberate attempt to renounce culture in the cause of love; in the end there is a return to culture, a reaffirmation of faith in it because the gulf between it and love is closed by the discovery that the arts give us life so well that what belongs to life also belongs to the arts. The woman, who speaks, finds herself both a torturer and a victim because she identifies herself with the love experience of mankind, of which the legend of Adonis is a perfect symbol.

In looking at the blood oozing from her nail in the sacred wood, she is unconsciously transported into the world of Adonis, lamented by beautiful women because he is slain by a boar.² These women with loosened hair and foreheads grief-distraught are like the creatures of pure emotion whom Mantegna has depicted in his canvas—these women have no business to think because life wells up so fully in their veins and is more than a substitute for the intellect they have neither missed nor desired.³ The speaker, a woman herself, is swept off her feet by this demonstration of love and sorrow, and bursts forth into lamentation as loud as that of the rest. It is here that she begins to live unfettered, having thrown off the load of pretentious culture that seemed almost to have choked the life out of her.

In the presence of Adonis, with the life ebbing away from him, she realized love's great power ("Love's bitter-sweet had all come back") and saw at the same time that pictures are as real as life ("Those bodies from a picture or a coin")—that the truth of the one was affirmed by the other. The hiatus which seemed to make culture a lifeless affair was now gone, and her ecstasy in love was complete when she fell down and shrieked without knowing what she was doing. The song excited her like strong wine, and in contemplating

(2) Cf. Yeats's theory of *Anima Mundi*.

(3) Prof. K. D. Bose of Presidency College, Calcutta, has drawn my attention to a parallel passage in W. B. Yeats's *Michael Robartes And The Dancer: Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (Macmillan, London, 1958, p. 198).

That blest souls are not composite,
And that all beautiful women may
Live in uncomposite blessedness,
And lead us to the like—if they
Will banish every thought

the scene of Adonis, slain and lamented, there was an evocation of love's power, which swayed her as a new deity, entering human life and making us by turns torturers and victims.

A few words of comment may be added to explain the phrases "wine-dark midnight" (stanza 1, l.2) and "wine-dark nail" (stanza 2, l.2) which seem to have been deliberately used to enforce a contrast and make a statement: "wine-dark" has associations with the Homeric epic, and the suggestion of an artistic tradition seems inseparable from the expression; "wine-dark midnight" should, therefore, mean the depth of an intellectual tradition, the profundity of its message, permeating the atmosphere. The meaning of "wine-dark nail" is obviously a nail, covered with a substance resembling the colour of wine, a blood-stained nail; its frequent use as an epithet for the sea gives rise to the implication that blood has the passionate violence of the sea.

(2)

SAILING TO BYZANTIUM

"That is no country for old men" is an abrupt beginning for a poem, and seems to imply a strong feeling of disapproval, if not of disgust. What Yeats describes as the characteristic situation he dislikes belongs to the world in general, and cannot be localised as a phenomenon confined to Europe or any other part of the world. The poet's flight is, therefore, from the world of time, change, and sensual pleasure to one which seems to have escaped from these conditions and achieved an eternal state by means of art and the ascendancy of intellect, or spiritual qualities. In the temporal dimension youth is a brief summer; all creatures inhabiting the earth, the air, or the water indulge while it lasts in pleasures of the senses, and are indifferent to the spiritual resources which have so much of value to give us.

The poet is old; his weak and ridiculous bodily condition ("A tattered coat upon a stick") is a heritage of the temporal world, which he now disowns so that he may discover a sphere—a Byzantium—where his disabilities will not reproach him or condemn him to isolation and misery. He is well aware that he has a scare-crow appearance but this need not shut him off from glory. The soul's wealth can atone for the body's worthlessness—the exuberance of its vigour can equal, even surpass the body in its prime but the soul's development comes from individual effort and not from the acceptance of an organized discipline ("singing school")—it comes by our contact with and contemplation of the things which testify to man's spiritual greatness ("Monuments of its own magnificence").

In the Byzantium of history there were churches, the walls of which had many effigies of saints, done in gold mosaic. The poet addresses them to

act as his guide and preceptor in his exploration of the spiritual realm. These sages (the poet avoids the term 'saint' because of its narrowly religious connotation) are bathed in a luminous glow, 'in God's holy fire', which encloses them as a ring encloses the honey buzzard 'perne in a gyre', giving a sense of the unconfined who dwell for ever in the freedom of the spirit. The poet wishes them to set him free from the heart and the tyranny of desire—he is "a dying animal"—desires torture him and prevent him from gaining self-knowledge ("It knows not what it is"). His prayer at this stage is unusual and unexpected; from the world of Nature he wishes to pass on to the world of art, which never perishes, to become himself an object of art. The most fantastic prayers have been known, but perhaps nothing like this has ever been said before.

Once the poet gives up his natural form, he will never owe it to Nature but will have a form such as "Grecian goldsmiths make of hammered gold and gold enamelling". To say the least, it is a very peculiar desire even in a poet, and we learn that he will take the shape of a bird (there is no running away from Nature!) and sing (Nature again will assert itself!) "set upon a golden bough" to keep a drowsy Emperor awake".¹ The golden bough is a branch of mistletoe which Aeneas on his descent to the subterranean world carried with him, acting as a lamp to his feet as well as a rod and staff to his hands.² The reference seems to imply that the song the poet wishes to sing will not lose sight of tradition and will be meant for an aristocratic audience with the Emperor at its head. The subject-matter will be time past, time present, and time to come. He will tunefully prophesy to an elegant and cultured audience having a form of his own, which will proclaim the perfection of Grecian goldsmiths, and in doing this he will be safely ensconced in tradition as his principal support for his adventure in song.

(1) Yeats's own note on the golden bough, however, runs as follows.— "I have read somewhere that in the Emperor's palace at Byzantium was a tree made of gold and silver, and artificial birds that sang". (*Collected Poems*, Macmillan & Co. Ltd. (London), 1958, p. 532).

(2) Sir James Frazer *The Golden Bough* (abridged into one volume), Macmillan (London), 1954. Pp. 706-707.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Theories of art stress aesthetic pleasure as the gift of art. In his sonnet on 'Chapman's "Homer"', Keats describes the impact of great poetry on the reader: its immediate effect is a physical sensation equated with the experience of travel through beautiful landscape, and the final, that of discovering, or being in contact with, the infinite, symbolized by the planet and the Pacific—there is thus a movement and elevation from the purely physical to the purely spiritual. The experience may perhaps be described as aesthetic pleasure, but the process involves quite often a feeling, which while it may widen the view to what is commonly called the infinite, can scarcely be described as one of pleasure. The conception of Katharsis does not seem to bridge the gulf between the initial feeling and the final experience. There are some loose ends if we proceed under the guidance of Aristotle, which require to be tied up.

Theories of art are often an obstacle to our discovery of the true cause of a given result. We are so completely under the spell of an Aristotle, a Coleridge, or a Richards that we fail to enquire into our own reaction to a work of art. We acquiesce in a given view when backed by a great name, and the consequence is that our critical faculties are crippled and rendered useless. When we read "Othello" or "Lear", do we feel pleasure or is there a purgation of the emotions? The idea of pleasure is quite alien to the experience, and the situation is hardly improved by describing it as aesthetic pleasure. The true feeling is that of a great and overpowering sorrow at an act of injustice, and sympathy for the victim.

We may perhaps obtain a clue from the reaction of a man, who never failed to describe his true feeling on reading a poem or a play in spite of the critical theories to which he subscribed. Dr. Johnson was besides guided by a strong common sense. He preferred a happy ending for "King Lear". "I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia's death, that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor". (Walter Raleigh, "Johnson on Shakespeare", Oxford, 1908, pp. 161-2).

At the end when the curtain drops on a scene of murder and cruelty, we have no reason to feel reconciled, no reason to accept what has happened as a vindication of some standard of universal justice. There is a sense of undeserved suffering, of man's disgraceful nature under the influence of jealousy, revenge, and envy. We feel pain and sorrow. Dr. Johnson's experience seems to have been far from being exceptional,

Although this may be the usual effect, we are able to ponder over it and see in it a meaning of human life, which at first can hardly reveal itself to us. Formulation of this meaning does not take place; for this is a task for critics and creative thinkers, and the average man is unequal to it; but our view is gradually enlarged and we begin to see something beyond the immediate, the finite. Pain as an experience thus organizes our intellectual and physical resources for stepping beyond the limits of our quotidian life to a planet swimming into our ken.

We do not think that we shall be far wrong in assuming that the effect of art in the highest form is to give us pain as an organizer of our thought and emotions, which move in general without a sense of direction. The effect of art is to give them an orientation, so that what was fragmentary becomes a whole. This integration comes from art, and art is thus an enricher of life.

That which propels us is not pleasure but pain. Pleasure seems to belong to the superficial level of our existence. It has no knowledge of the heights and depths of human nature. Art in its transcendent aspect speaks mainly to these, and the greatness of art is the expression of the greatness of man. Pain is the secret of life, and all progress to a higher form of existence involves agonies and afflictions of the spirit, a kind of wrestling in which the whole of our being is engaged. Religious men, artists, and thinkers have placed on record such experiences.

Hence the true point of view in relation to art is that, although in some of its more popular forms, it seeks to provide pleasure and enjoyment, its most important role is to bring us into touch with something greater than ourselves, which it does by means of pain—the pain the poet has known and which everybody must know to make the discovery he has made.

(2)

Lord Gattenden formulates a god formula to Lord Edward in "Point Counter Point" over the telephone. The passage is interesting and is worth quoting. Lord Gattenden is speaking: "Such a really remarkable discovery. I wanted your opinion on it. About God. You have the formula m over nought equals infinity, m being any positive number? Well, why not reduce the equation to a simpler form by multiplying both sides by nought? In which case you have m equals infinity times nought. That is to say that a positive number is the product of zero and infinity. Doesn't that demonstrate the creation of the universe by an infinite power out of nothing? Doesn't it?" (Point Counter Point, Penguin, p. 140)

In spite of the obvious perversity, the argument is ingenious. "Men of Mathematics" by E. T. Bell (1937) records an incident, which appears to be Huxley's source for this rather ingenious evidence. Invited by Catherine

the Great to visit her Court, Diderot earned his keep by trying to convert the courtiers to atheism. Catherine commissioned Euler to muzzle the philosopher. This was very easy because all mathematics was Chinese to Diderot. De Morgan tells what happened (in his classic "Budget of Paradoxes", 1872). "Diderot was informed that a learned mathematician was in possession of an algebraical demonstration of the existence of God, and would give it before all the Court, if he desired to hear it. Diderot gladly consented. Euler advanced towards Diderot, and said gravely, in a tone of perfect conviction:

"Sir, $\frac{a+b^n}{n} = x$. Hence God exists; reply!"

It sounded like sense to Diderot. Humiliated by the unrestrained laughter which greeted his embarrassed silence, the poor man asked Catherine's permission to return at once to France. She graciously gave it."

This story about Diderot is now held to be apocryphal.

REVIEWS

J. M. Cohen: *Robert Graves* & D. W. Jefferson: *Henry James* (Writers And Critics Series. Oliver and Boyd. Edinburgh and London).

J. M. Cohen's thin paper-back (pp. 120) on Robert Graves is claimed to be "the first full-length study of his work that has so far appeared". It was published in 1960 in the "Writers And Critics" series under the general editorship of Professor A. Norman Jeffares. The next book on our list also belongs to the same series.

Graves has been versatile as a literary man, and although his publications as a poet are the most numerous, he has written an autobiography, some half a dozen works of fiction, at least three books of criticism, of which *The Crowning Privilege* (The Clark Lectures 1954-5) gave rise to protracted controversy, two books on mythology and certain miscellaneous items. Mr. Cohen concentrates on Graves's poetry, treating other material as peripheral to the study he undertakes. His chief purpose is to substantiate Graves's title as a major poet, although as he admits the limited scale on which he writes is not a favourable circumstance for establishing such a claim.

Miss Helen Gardner has tried to answer the question: Why is a poet a major poet? "The major poet's work must have bulk; he must attempt with success one or other of the greater poetic forms, which tests his gifts of invention and variation; he cannot claim the title on a handful of lyrics however exquisite. His subject-matter must have universally recognized importance, and he must treat it with imaginative authority we call originality; he must have something at once personal and of general relevance to say on important aspects of human experience". What Miss Gardner proposes as criterion for a major poet may be accepted as mainly valid. To describe a poet as a minor poet is not, however, a sign of unjust severity and it does not amount to a denial of excellence. T. S. Eliot's comments provide helpful elucidation: "When I say minor I mean very good poets indeed: such as filled the Greek anthology and the Elizabethan song-books; even Herrick; but not merely second-rate poets".

We shall briefly notice what Mr. Cohen has to say to support his contention. He examines a poem, typical of Graves's middle period, "O Love, be fed with apples while you may", and points out its irony; how love suffers by the taint of lust, without losing its glory in spite of its hectic nature,—this seems to be the poet's view. After suggesting a connexion with the Metaphysical School of Donne, Mr. Cohen observes with what justice we cannot ascertain: "The tension in a Graves poem is, on the contrary, one between heart with its proneness to easy and even sentimental

acceptance, and head whose propensity is to deny and destroy by ratiocination". The statement is hardly intelligible in the light of the verses quoted. There seems to be on the other hand a tendency to be didactic, to advise and direct, rather than to suffer from a conflict between the head and the heart:

Take your delight in momentariness,
Walk between dark and dark—a shining space
With the grave's narrowness, though not its peace.

These lines do not show pain, perplexity, or agitation. They do not intermingle thought and feeling or reveal other complexities. They are excellent as advice to lovers: a sense of doom must not, in spite of its certainty, overshadow the delight of the moment. It is a time-worn view and expressed without any especial charm of manner. Mr. Cohen tells us that Graves has finally taken up an intermediate position, nearer to the Classical pole than to the Romantic and that each poem he writes is a fresh experiment, entirely free from the element of imitation, but influences of various poets are nevertheless discernible in his work (*e.g.* Blake, Hardy, Housman, Lear, de la Mare and also of Border Ballads and nursery rhymes).

Summaries of poems, and occasional important remarks like Skelton's lesson teaching Graves a sense of liveliness in poetic composition, form the most valuable part of the book. Of "Rocky Acres", which he relates to W. H. Auden's first volume of poems, Mr. Cohen remarks that Graves drew in it a landscape treating it as a projection of a state of mind, a practice which could be traced to a number of poets writing in this century like Rilke, Edwin Muir, Boris Pasternak and W. H. Auden.

The other aspects of Graves's literary output are also considered. They are however examined without detailed analysis. Of his poetry one element is a musing sense of the paradox of human relationships, which he describes in such lines as the following:

Far away is close at hand,
Close joined is far away.

It is in such occasional divings into what may be a deeply-felt personal experience that we discover what is most original in Graves: for neither in irony nor in metrical experiment does he rise to the greatness of a major poet, a title which he does not seem justly to earn.

The book is interesting and well-written and contains nearly all the relevant information for making an estimate of Graves's achievement as poet. What seems neglected in this brief study is an indication of Graves's position in relation to the poets of his time, who are often mentioned without an attempt at building up a view of contemporary poetry, which alone could

provide a conclusive idea about the nature and value of the poetical work of Robert Graves. No attempt has been made in the book to point out the relation between Graves's poetry and his non-poetical works.

It seems that Graves will not be regarded in the critical world as a major poet. The label of a minor poet may easily be applied to him in the honourable sense in which the expression has been used by T. S. Eliot.

Henry James by D. W. Jefferson belongs to the same series (Writers and Critics) and contains the same number of pages but as the bibliography shows, unlike Graves, James has been the subject of a large number of books and articles. Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, a work of fiction, does not naturally figure in the bibliography but it offers comments, which, for the early date of its publication, indicate an awareness of the Jamesian technique of an exceptionally revealing nature. She characterizes James's art as "The first satisfying way of writing a novel. This new way of statement." James's *The Ambassadors* calls forth the remark, which prominently illustrates the technique of a consistent viewpoint or level of awareness and for which the American novelist provides the first and the best example.

Jefferson divides his study into seven chapters, adding a bibliography at the end. He does not much concern himself with questions of technique. One would have much liked to know how far James gave a correct picture of his own art when he wrote: "A novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life: that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression. But there will be no intensity at all, and therefore no value, unless there is freedom to feel and say". (*The Art Of Fiction*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1948, p 8). Instead of discussing what is fundamental to James's art, Jefferson seems to be content with taking an external view of the novelist's achievement: "There is no clearly-marked beginning to an "English" phase in James's career as a writer of fiction. After "A Passionate Pilgrim", the fruit of his first enthusiasm, several years pass before English themes become important" (pp. 49-50). Even worse than this exoteric approach is the rather naive admission which Jefferson makes in the following words: "To do justice to Henry James, to convey any adequate impression of the quality and quantity of pleasure his work can give, one would need a prose as rich and vehement as his own". (p. 99). After all, the business of the critic is not to be like his subject; he is not called upon to emulate his excellence but to give a reasonable account of it. This our critic does not seem to undertake because of a diffidence in the presence of James's greatness as a writer.

Although important problems are not discussed, the critic tries to present a view of the novelist on the basis of a chronological record of his life and work. This is useful as an introduction, and although there are a

great many better guides like Lubbock, Leavis, Leon Edel and Joseph Warren Beach, Jefferson may still be liked because of his pedestrian treatment of the material and the avoidance of both the heights and depths of analysis, which belong to a more recondite treatment and, therefore, find fewer readers.

Eric Partridge: *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 2 volumes. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., Price 10s.

The first edition of the Dictionary was published in one volume in 1937. It has since passed through several editions, and was also re-printed four times. The 1961 Edition (the fifth) comprises 2 volumes, the second volume is a supplement and is offered for the first time. It considerably enlarges the information contained in the one-volume edition and brings the investigation up to date. The work done by Mr. Partridge supplies a need. The subject has been neglected for a whole generation since the publication of *A Dictionary of Slang and Colloquial English* by John S. Farmer and W. Henley. A vast quantity of new material waited to be given a fixed meaning and usage, thus rendering it accessible to the interested world both at home and abroad. The publication of the N. E. D. and other scholarly works like the *Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* by Ernest Weekley, made the undertaking somewhat more feasible than it would have otherwise been, but even then such a work would be impossible without a life-time of devoted industry.

Mr Partridge uses the material contained in Farmer & Henley. We find him, for example, borrowing an illustrative quotation under "fat is in the fire" from the earlier authority but while he does this he shows how practically every word has had a new accretion of meaning. 'Push' is shown to have 11 distinct senses against the gloss "enterprise" etc. by Farmer and Henley. The point made here is not at all important. For the present work's debt to its predecessor is generously acknowledged by the author, and one takes no time to discover how enormously more informative is the study Mr Partridge has produced.

The main sources of slang are sex, war, drinking, and schools and colleges, and the cause explaining its appearance is the desire to achieve a direct, fresh, and picturesque communication. We find a universal trend in language towards a descent in meaning: *an abbe* (a procurer), *an academician* (a harlot), *Acteon* (a cuckold), and Jesus appears in blasphemous oaths like *by the jabbers*. There is, however, no compensating ascent in meaning. The fact seems to be a revealing comment upon human psychology; it is more readily at home in the imperfect than in the perfect, and in the process of debasement, the common mind finds exhilaration and aids it by its own ingenuity.

Other sources of the slang are found in the cinema, the theatre and in Broadcasting. Falstead School has a considerable body of slang. In "The

Felstedian" of December 1947 was published a glossary of current slang, arranged subject-wise. Mr Partridge reproduces with certain changes the material in his second volume (p. 1086); the Korean War (1951-55) has also brought into currency a number of slang words, which have been listed and explained (p. 1162); among these words 'Kutch'a' (a mule) is mentioned without a reference to the fact that there is a word with the same spelling in the N. E. D., derived from Hindi but having a completely different meaning as given by the N. E. D. "Raw, crude, unripe, uncooked". On p. 202 Mr Partridge notices the word, giving its meaning: "Cutcha, Kutcha. Makeshift, inferior, spurious, bad. Anglo-Indian and hence military". He also adds the meaning according to N.E.D. definition. A cross-reference would have made the gloss illuminating. The suggestion that the meaning of the word is military in origin seems an unnecessary narrowing of its connotation. A short article 'It is Said in Film-land: "Slangage" the "Movies" Have Made' is reprinted (pp. 537-538) from *Tit-Bits*, March 31, 1934. We learn from it that a visitor to a modern studio is surprised to "find the technicians and artists speaking one of the strangest languages ever evolved". We shall refer to a few words for the purpose of illustration: "Niggers", a special type of blackboards; "spiders", a type of electric switches; "Gertrude", a giant steel crane; "Dollies", low trucks, with pneumatic-tired wheels; "Juicers", electricians. A sentence is quoted below to illustrate more fully this trend to the slang vocabulary: "When a film is completed it is 'in the can'. Every time a scene is successfully 'shot' it is called 'a take'; the whole of the day's 'takes' are then assembled and shown to the producer in a private projection room, but are then known as 'the rushes' or 'the dailies'.

The Tavern terms, which Mr Partridge has borrowed from an anonymous pamphlet, published in 1650: *The Eighth Liberal Science: or a new-found Art and Order of Drinking*, are given on pp. 1312-1314. They are likely to prove useful to students of Elizabethan literature. In the list of the titles given by drinkers to one another we come across the following terms:—*a good fellow, a boon companion, a mad Greek, a true Trojan, a stiff blade, a sound card, a merry comrade*, etc. An interesting piece of information comes from a statement containing descriptive epithets for 'drinkers in vogue in schools: *A fat corpulent fellow, A Master of Arts; A lean drunkard, A Batchelor. He that hath a Red-nose, A Doctor.*

Proper names which have turned into words have been discussed at length by Mr Eric Partridge in his *Name into World* (1949). The subject is of great interest, and additions made to it are almost a matter of daily occurrence. A comparatively recent admission is the name of Vidkun Quisling (1889-1946), the Norwegian Army Officer, turned traitor. Its meaning as given by Mr Partridge is "A tell-tale, esp. one who carries favour with the C. O. by acting as tale-bearer". *Artful Joe* seems to be derived

from the name of Joseph Chamberlain. Others with a long history will include *Hobson's Choice* ("That or none").

Certain expressions occurring in well-known poems offer a baffling problem to readers unacquainted with slang. One of such words is *runcible*, "(of women) sexually attractive". A great many new words have come into currency within a generation. They express a dwindling standard and the pictures they suggest have almost a universal validity in the world of corrupt practice, e.g. *handshake*, "a bribe handed surreptitiously"; *earwigger* is an eavesdropper. The word arose about the year 1940. "Have Parker trouble" is "to have one's conversation listened-to by an outsider" (since 1945); *Orange*, a long-distance call, since 1939.

Some of the words quoted above are still in their babyhood: there are many which are younger still. To compile them was a heroic undertaking but one wonders if certain expressions, bandied about for a year, earn the right to enter the dictionary of a language, even the vocabulary of slang. One expression 'durry nacker' said to mean "a female lace-hawker, gen. practising palmistry" is not perhaps derived from Romany dukker, to tell fortunes. It may be closer to 'hawker', and 'durry' seems to be Hindi in origin; 'durry' is a rough fibre out of which ropes are manufactured; its implication as 'lace' happens, therefore, to be an example of that ascent in meaning, which has been stated above to be almost unknown as a linguistic phenomenon.

The two volumes of the Dictionary testify to immense learning and scholarship, and then value to students of the English language, even to other interested readers, cannot be exaggerated. Mr Partridge gives a number of meanings, some of which are rather suggested by usage than by a clear sense of the terms in vogue. In doing this, he has aided the cause of clarity and fought against the ambiguities, which often creep into words and expressions, and render the problem of accuracy of statement a baffling one. Every one interested in the English language will feel grateful to the author because of this monumental work, which by the standard of achievement will rank almost as high as Dr Johnson's famous Lexicon.

Dr Johnson included "cant words" occasionally in his Dictionary, because of their vogue. His normal practice was, however, to reject them for being 'low'. He would have seen in Mr Partridge's acceptance of words borrowed from all parts of the world cause to alarm him. He set himself to denounce "the folly of naturalising useless foreigners to the injury of the natives". His standpoint is indicated by the following statement: "We have long preserved our constitution, let us make some struggle for our language". Mr Partridge serves the cause Dr Johnson served.

L. H.

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